

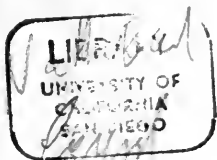


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BY

GARRETT CHATFIELD PIER

AUTHOR OF "INSCRIPTIONS OF THE NILE MONUMENTS," ETC.



*"Provided thou art an equipped soul, knowing
the Secret Name of Thoth, thou shalt pass unharmed
through that abyss which hath no air, whose depths
are illimitable."*

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

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FOREWORD

MY READER. Perhaps you have had the good fortune to visit Egypt! If such be the case, you have undoubtedly stood among the giant columns of the Temple to the Sun-god Amen in the Northern Apt (Karnak). You have marveled at the ever changing colors which light up the walls and columns of the Temple of the Southern Apt (Luxor), so that at one moment they seem to have been carved from blocks of amber, at another from coral, jasper, amethyst or, as the last bright rays of the sinking sun fall full upon them, from colossal bars of red Nubian gold.

You have gazed in awe and reverence at the mummy of King Amenhotep, lying in his granite sarcophagus, peacefully asleep he seemed, deep down in the very heart of the Theban Hills.

In an alcove nearby you may recall the three bodies lying, uncoffined, upon the bare rock of the tomb chamber. You were informed that the

bodies had been removed from their own tombs to this secret chamber of a dead Pharaoh, that they might be saved from the hands of tomb-robbers.

“The mummies of unknown royal personages,” your Arab guide informed you.

Perhaps the guide permitted you to touch the long black tresses of one of the three. He pointed out what he called the mark of an arrow, which caused the death of another. He told you that the boy had undoubtedly met his death at the hands of a strangler. He hinted at foul murder!

If what he said of the three was true, he might well have attempted to identify the bodies. They are, perhaps, those of Wazmes, Queen Hanit’s murdered son, the beautiful slave girl Bhanar, and her one-time mistress, the Princess Sesen, whose wavy black hair appears as soft to-day as when Ramses and Menna wooed her, as when Renny the Syrian died for her.

All this, and more, you have doubtless seen.

Yet, it is safe to say, you have never so much as heard of the mystery surrounding the tomb of Menna, son of Menna, that most baffling among the many mysterious tombs in and about the great Theban cemeteries.

Undoubtedly, Menna, son of Menna, had in life an enemy, a most vindictive enemy; one whose malignant hatred followed Menna into his very tomb.

Enter that tomb to-day, and you see at a glance that this enemy sought to nullify and make ineffectual the entire series of engraved prayers and magic formulæ which witness to Menna's hopes for an eternity of bliss upon the banks of the Celestial Nile. Yes, Menna's implacable foe sought to destroy him, both body and soul!

Menna's body was not found when, recently, his tomb was discovered and opened. We may thus infer that Menna's arch-enemy accomplished the destruction of Menna's body as successfully, as fiendishly we may suppose, as he did that of Menna's soul.

Examine the sculptures upon the walls of his tomb. You will find that Menna's eyes have been cut out; that the lips of his servants and field hands are missing; that the tips of his hunting arrows have been blunted; that the knots in his "measuring-rope" have been destroyed. Yet, worse than all, the plumb of the scales, upon which Menna's heart will be weighed at the Judgment, has vanished.

Let us suppose that Menna's mummy *had* been found, found intact, at the opening of his tomb. That empty shell would have been of little use to Menna. Since, following his enemy's work of desecration upon the ordered prayers, incantations and scenes painted or engraved upon the walls of his tomb, Menna's body was doomed to inevitable destruction, and with it, that of his *ka* or "double," that other self which, from the day of his birth, awaited him in the heavens.

Without eyes Menna could not find his way among the flint-strewn valleys and precipitous heights of the Underworld. Without arrows

Menna would be unable to obtain food. Menna's servants had all perished, as without mouths they could neither eat nor drink. And Menna might never measure off an allotted acreage among the ever fertile fields of Heaven if, in spite of all, he somehow managed to win through to the Celestial Nile.

Alas! this success Menna could never hope to achieve. The breaking of the plumb of the scales rendered it impossible that Menna's trembling soul could pass Osiris, Judge of the Dead, or the fierce hound Amemet, which, with open mouth, awaited his victims beside that great god's throne.

No! Menna could never hope to feast at the Table of the Gods. Menna could never enjoy that eternity of bliss among the Blessed Fields of Aaru which a beneficent Sun-god had promised to the faithful.

But, Menna's body was *not* found at the time of the discovery of his tomb, though his body had evidently been placed in the white sarcophagus prepared for it by royal command.

Who so bitterly hated Menna, the King's Overseer? Who so relentlessly sought not alone the destruction of his mortal body but the very annihilation of his soul?

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWORD	V
I. TELLS OF HOW PROFESSOR RANNEY PURCHASED AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT AND OF WHAT HE FOUND THEREIN .	1
II. A FALL DOWN THIRTY CENTURIES . .	16
III. ENANA THE MAGICIAN, WOULD PROVE THAT A RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN A QUEEN AND A PRIESTESS MAY BE TURNED TO HIS ADVANTAGE . .	33
IV. HOW BHANAR CAME TO THEBES . .	45
V. THE PLEASURE BARGE OF THI, THE QUEEN-MOTHER	53
VI. HOW BHANAR FOUND A HOME IN EGYPT.	66
VII. HOW RENNY THE SYRIAN ESCAPED THE CROCODILES	83
VIII. NŌFERT-ĀRI DANCES BEFORE PHARAOH.	91
IX. THE LUMINOUS BOOK	119
X. PHARAOH SEEKS TO EXALT A FOREIGN GOD	138
XI. THE STATUE OF AMEN DISAPPEARS .	152

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. ENANA CALLS TO HIS AID THE GODS JUSTICE AND VENGEANCE	165
XIII. RAMSES AND SESEN	172
XIV. A RASH PROMISE	187
XV. A STATUE OF HATHOR, GODDESS OF LOVE	200
XVI. THE CURSE OF HUY, GREAT HIGH PRIEST OF AMEN	208
XVII. WHY MENNA'S CHAIRBEARER STAKED HIS ALL	218
XVIII. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN MENNA, SON OF MENNA, WENT A-WOOING	228
XIX. THE HITTITES ADVANCE	239
XX. HOW BAR AND RENNY MEET FOR THE LAST TIME	247
XXI. OF THE CAPTURE OF BELUR, THE HIT- TITE	256
XXII. THE "DOUBLE" OF HANIT	266

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CHAPTER I

TELLS OF HOW PROFESSOR RANNEY PURCHASED
AN ANCIENT MANUSCRIPT AND OF WHAT HE
FOUND THEREIN.

THE shop of Tanos the Greek, "Dealer in Genuine Antiques," as the sign above the door advised, might well have been named a museum of ancient art and curiosities. Entered from the front of the Sharia Kamel, one of the main thoroughfares of Cairo, the shop appeared at first glance to consist of but two long narrow rooms, the one immediately behind the other. Both rooms were filled to the very ceiling with curios of all sorts, from little agate beads to vast and shapeless mummies of Sacred

Bulls. A half dozen bodies of Egyptian priests, unwrapped and black with natron, stood propped against the walls of the upper room. The odor of cinnamon, myrrh and other embalming essences filled the rooms and drifted out through the open door to blend with the indefinable, but never forgettable, odor of the Cairene streets.

A nearer view of the upper room disclosed the approach to what Tanos called the "holy of holies." This third, or innermost chamber, was screened from the eyes of the ordinary souvenir hunter by an ivory-inlaid door of ancient Coptic woodwork.

Connoisseurs generally knew that here were kept the treasures *par excellence*. Here Tanos would display rare statuettes, bronzes, ivories and richly glazed potteries for the archæologist; inscriptions on stone or papyrus for the philologist; diadems or pendants in the precious metals, necklaces, bracelets and bangles of varicolored gems,—all such rich treasure from the seemingly inexhaustible storehouse of antiquity

as would be most likely to tempt the antiquarian, or dazzle the mere man of millions seeking to enrich his curio cabinet or the shelves of his pet museum or institution.

During the course of an unusually hot afternoon in late March three Europeans paused at the threshold of Tanos' shop.

Following their exit from the Ezbekiyeh Gardens their footsteps had been dogged by that genial soul, Ali Nubi, whose efforts to dispose of fly-whisks and sunshades were in no wise affected by the temperature. He was soon joined by a troupe of exceedingly dirty Arab children. These turned handsprings along the gutter in hopes of some small coin with which to buy *loukum*.

Finally, the nerves of the three Europeans had been set on edge by the insistent whine of a deformed Egyptian, whose ceaseless cry for dole, "*baksheesh, baksheesh, ya khawageh,*" finally caused one of the trio to turn upon him with an impatient, *Allah yalik, kelb ibn kelb*. This, in plain English, might be rendered,

"May God give to thee, dog, son of a dog," at once a pious wish and a curse.

The sound of the guttural Arabic sufficed to scatter at one and the same instant all three disturbing elements.

The ragged boys fled. Ali Nubi sauntered off to display his merchandise and his famous smile elsewhere, whilst the cripple, with a frightened glance up and down the street, made off as fast as his deformities would allow. The white man was doubtless a *pasha*, a *bey*. Abut Talib felt the sting of the bastinado upon his withered limbs!

With a laugh the "bey" turned to his companions:

"Enter, Mrs. Gardiner! After you, Clem! I want you to see my latest find."

Professor Ranney followed his companions into the shop. In answer to his call Tanos himself appeared at the door of the sanctum. His face lit up with a smile of genuine pleasure when he recognized his visitors.

He crossed the room with that peculiar crook-

ing of the spine which appears to be an ineradicable heritage of the ages to Levantines of his stamp wherever met. How well did the Egyptian sculptor of the late New Empire catch that deferential abasement of self!

Professor Ranney shook hands with Tanos. Gardiner, too, greeted him, and introduced the lady of the trio as his bride. For an instant Tanos searched his fertile brains for a suitable congratulatory quotation from the Arabian classics. Oriental etiquette demanded that he rise to the emergency. Finally, bending over Mrs. Gardiner's hand, Tanos murmured those charming lines from Abu Selim's poem on the love of Omar and Leila.

"Oh, Mr. Tanos! What exquisite verses. What a wonderful gift of improvisation!"

Tanos bowed again. He made a deprecatory gesture, murmuring as he did so something about the meter of the second line.

Mrs. Gardiner shot a covert glance in the direction of her husband.

The minx, thought he. He well knew that she

had recognized the true authorship of the verses. Mrs. Gardiner had been a former student of her husband at the University of London, where he taught Semitics.

These small social amenities attended to, Tanos ushered his visitors into the innermost room. In another moment all four were seated about a low Turkish table. Upon this reposed two objects, a turquoise-blue goblet of ancient Egyptian pottery and a linen roll, seemingly of great antiquity, if one might judge by its condition.

Meeting the Gardiners in the tea-house of the Gardens, Professor Ranney had urged them to walk over to the shop, in order that they might see the contents of this linen roll, a papyrus scroll of greatest importance, not alone on its own account, but, more especially, for the remarkable document which it contained.

Professor Ranney carefully unrolled the frail, discolored linen in which, three thousand years before, the scroll had been wrapped. At once

the air was filled with a strange, aromatic perfume.

At sight of the brightly painted vignettes which ornamented each and every page of the closely written sheets, Mrs. Gardiner burst into repeated exclamations of rapture. Even Dr. Gardiner, her husband, who may be said to have lived in an atmosphere charged with the odor of ancient parchments, could not repress his interest.

This interest was intensified when he read, on the front page of the manuscript, the names of an ancient Egyptian monarch "*Nibmara Amenhotep, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Triumphant.*"

"This is indeed a treasure, Steven! A perfect copy of the Book of the Dead. You did well to purchase it before I got wind of it. By Jove! It is in better condition than the Papyrus of Ani in the British Museum!"

Without replying Steven Ranney turned to the last two pages of the scroll. Inserted be-

tween them was a brown stained sheet of hieroglyphics written in red ink.

“Read this, Clem. To me it appears to be a find of far more importance than the Ritual itself.”

Gardiner translated aloud the lines of somewhat tremblingly written hieroglyphics:

“A Contract which the Hereditary Prince, the Count, Sole Companion of the King, Instructor of the Royal Princess, and Chief Royal Architect, Amenhotep, son of Hap, made with Hotepira, Great High Priest of Amen.

“It is ordained that there be given to the statue of Amenhotep which is in his tomb on the western shore, 1,000 loaves of bread, 1,000 fatted geese, 1,000 jars of wine and 100 bulls, upon the 1st day of the 1st month of the year, what time the servants bring presents to their lord, and lights are lit in house, in tomb and in temple!

“In payment of this endowment of his tomb, Amenhotep, son of Hap, engages to reveal to Hotepira, Great High Priest of Amen, the secret.

*hiding-place of the Luminous Book of Thoth,
Scribe of the Gods!*

*“Behold! Amenhotep, son of Hap, he saith:
‘By the magic incantation contained within this
book the Gods are compelled! By its hekau-
charms the Boat of the Sun is stopped, the Moon
is darkened!*

*“Lo, he that reciteth the formulæ contained
therein, may descend into the Underworld and
return to mingle again with mortal men.*

*“Lo, the possessor of this Book becomes as
the Scribe of the Gods, Thoth himself! For Ra
hath breathed upon it; Shu hath entered it!*

*“Saith Amenhotep, son of Hap: ‘Behold, as
Ra the Sungod liveth, the Magic Book may be
found in a box behind the wall of the false door
built within the western end of my tomb cham-
ber!’*

*“Now, Hoteptra heard the oath of Amenhotep
and the saying which he said.*

*“Lo, Hoteptra, Great High Priest of Amen,
believed the words of the son of Hapi.*

“Hotepra, Great High Priest of Amen, signed the contract, taking the Great Gods, Osiris, Ptah and Ra as witnesses.”

“There, Clem! In all your years of research among ancient documents have you ever run across the Luminous Book, the Book of Thoth? Could it, by any chance, be that mysterious book made use of long ago by the sorcerers and magician attached to the great Temple of Amen at Thebes? If such be the case, it is an undoubted reference to the book from which Moses studied, the source of Aaron’s successful attempt to confound the magicians of Pharaoh. At any rate, Clem, you will agree with me that this faded sheet, this last will and testament of the old architect, may turn out to be of far greater interest than even this splendid copy of the Ritual. I wonder if the will was placed in the Ritual on purpose or through the carelessness of someone. Hotepra himself it may have been, three thousand years ago!”

Professor Ranney's Manuscript II

Dr. Gardiner smiled at his friend's enthusiasm: "One thing at a time, Steven! Yes, I have met with the Book of Thoth before. And in each and every case it was referred to as a book containing magical incantations of great power. In one case an unknown architect states that he '*raised this monument whose pylons reach the dome of heaven by means of the magic Book of Thoth.*' Your man, Amenhotep, son of Hap, has left an inscription, now in the Leiden Museum, in which he affirms that he '*possessed the Eye of Horus*'—whatever that may mean—and further that he was '*one who knew all the Wisdom contained in the Book of Thoth, scribe of the Gods.*' That this was no empty boast we may sight the stupendous temples raised by him at Thebes, not forgetting 'the Colossi,' which alone would have assured him undying fame, if indeed he erected them. The tomb to which he refers in this testament is thought to be beneath the Temple of Der el-Medinet. Possibly it is included in your con-

cession, Steven. Your men may stumble upon the mummy of Amenhotep, Magic Book and all!"

Dr. Gardiner turned to his wife: "Well, Dear! We must be off, to help Ali with the packing. I hope you have a successful winding up of the diggings, Steven!"

"And Steven," broke in his wife, "do let those abominable old brick ruins alone and hunt for the Book instead. By the way, do you suppose Hoteptra had a wife? The name is similar to that of Potiphar?"

"My dear," interposed Gardiner, as he assumed an expression of shocked delicacy, "the subject is hardly one for a bride to discuss, especially as Great High Priests of Amen, by the uninitiated at least, are *presumed* to have had no wives."

He turned to Ranney: "Steven, we both hope that you can stop over at 'Sevenoaks' as usual, for a few days at least, on your way through to Liverpool. Whew! It is difficult to realize that we shall be enjoying the Mediterranean breezes to-morrow. Which reminds me.

Professor Ranney's Manuscript 13

Tanos, don't forget to have the Museum authorities place their *visé* on that statue of Isis. Bénédic't has his eagle eye upon it, and what Bénédic't wishes he usually obtains. A little *baksheesh* in the clammy palm of Pintsch Pasha will help to get it through!"

Dr. Gardiner turned again to his wife: "Now, Miriam, don't drop that goblet! We could never pay for it, though I read manuscripts until the crack of doom!"

With exaggerated care Mrs. Gardiner restored the beautiful goblet to its place. She then shook hands with Tanos, reiterated her husband's wish that Professor Ranney visit them in their new home, and left on the arm of Dr. Gardiner.

Steven Ranney turned to the Greek: "Tanos, put the scroll in your safe until I return. The will of Amenhotep I will take with me. I want to show it to Todros Pasha. He's pretty familiar with the tombs of the western bank. I'll see you in about three weeks' time. Meanwhile, if you manage to get that statue of Hathor from Nahman, I'll take it."

With a friendly nod the young American again braved the heat of the unprotected sidewalk.

Ranney took his way northward, along the Sharia Kamel, in the direction of Doctor Braintree's tree-embowered villa.

During his three days' relaxation from the strain of acting as chief-of-excavations amid the heat and dust of work in Upper Egypt, Ranney had contrived to see more of Susan Braintree than usually fell to his lot. Ranney had loved her from the very first moment he had seen her, and that was as far back as February, nearly two months!

It is unnecessary to describe Susan. Ranney did that in every letter he wrote home to his mother and sister in beautiful Greenwich, Connecticut. Susan was there described as a paragon of beauty and sweetness. Yet, there seemed to be a fly in the ointment. A tall and "not a bad looking sort of chap," so Ranney described him, a lieutenant of the Seaforth Highlanders, apparently caused Steven not a little worry. It seemed that back in their Highland home he

Professor Ranney's Manuscript 15

lived in the same Scottish village as the Braintrees, brother and sister.

“By George, I’ll take old Amenhotep’s will to Braintree’s dinner to-night. I’m sure Susan will be interested; at any rate, she’ll pretend to be, bless her. Perhaps she’ll find it more to her taste than that Egyptian flint knife I showed her yesterday. Yet, I am surprised that a surgeon’s sister, and a head-nurse at that, should evince such horror of a knife, even though that ancient instrument had served the embalmer to make the last great incision.”

Late that evening, after a few short but blissful hours spent by Susan’s side—Lieutenant Angus Hector McPherson being then on duty at the Garrison—Ranney threw his kitbag into a sleeper of the night train to Upper Egypt.

After some ten hours of fitful sleep amidst the choking dust and fine sand which would persist in floating into the compartment, Steven Ranney found himself once again upon the very modern station platform of Thebes, the world’s most ancient city.

CHAPTER II

A FALL DOWN THIRTY CENTURIES

THE research work conducted by Professor Ranney, as chief of the Yale expedition to Egypt, had lain in and about the site of the Mortuary Temple of King Amenhotep the Third, well-named "Magnificent." The low depression which to-day marks the site of this once gorgeous edifice lies well down upon the broad Theban Plain, and immediately fronts that long line of rocky mounds, refuse heaps and ruined tombs which rises, tier upon tier, along the lower slopes of the towering Libyan Hills.

It had been a site of rare possibilities from an Egyptologist's point of view. On this account excavation privileges hereabouts had been sought by representatives of every great museum or seat-of-learning both in the Old World and the New.

A Fall Down Thirty Centuries 17

When, finally, the news was telegraphed from Cairo that this most coveted concession had fallen to the Yale Expedition, and that together with a substantial area of the unexplored mounds to the north and south of the temple site, great had been Professor Ranney's joy.

The recent unearthing of the body and rich treasure of Pharaoh Akhtenaton, son to that Pharaoh by whom the temple was built, and the discovery of the rich and comprehensive tomb-equipment of Akhtenaton's father and mother-in-law, together with the marvelously preserved mummies of those ancient worthies, had fired the dampened ardor both of the workers in the field, and, more important still, perhaps, of those holders of the purse-strings, the sponsors for the expedition at home.

As I have said above, the site of King Amenhotep's Mortuary Temple had been freely acknowledged to be a very promising one, and so far these hopes had been entirely justified.

Many and rare had been the finds during the season's work now drawing to a close. And it

was not improbable that some other find of the first importance might still fall to the spades of the excavators during the next few weeks of work upon the site.

Think what the nearby Temple of Medinet might at this very moment hold for Professor Ranney! The tomb of Amenhotep, son of Hap; the Magic Book of the Sorcerers of Pharaoh, the Luminous Book of Thoth!

Had they had the least suspicion of Professor Ranney's secret it is safe to say that many of his brother scientists would gladly have bartered five years of their lives for a chance at the site. And yet, could any one of those enthusiasts have foreseen the disaster that would here befall him, not a man among them would have approached it.

But let us take up the tale, as long as we may, in Professor Ranney's own words.

I had recently completed my work in and about the site of the Mortuary Temple of the illustrious Pharoah Amenhotep the Third and had already promised myself a trial excavation

A Fall Down Thirty Centuries 19

at the nearby tomb of Pharaoh's famous architect and namesake, Amenhotep, when something unexpected occurred to effectually put an end to all my plans. What that something was you shall now hear!

As near as I can piece together the amazing threads of my story, this is what happened to me that last eventful evening in Thebes. My diary, in part, supplies the clue.

Under date of April 28, 1913, and immediately following the rough translation of a great memorial tablet which had been found the previous day, I note this entry: "*Sandstorm just blown over. Headache, feverish. Finished making plan of palace to scale.*"

Now, in spite of the temperature and headache to which I here refer, and which, had I not been so keen on my work, I should most certainly have recognized as a symptom of trouble to come, I had evidently sought to catch up with a somewhat neglected report of the season's work.

This occupation had apparently kept me at my

desk well on towards dawn. I deduce this from the fact that immediately following the above short entry, I find a number of fragmentary hieroglyphic inscriptions having to do with the history of the foundation and erection of Pharaoh's Mortuary Temple, upon which I had been so long at work.

One of these entries is of special interest in this connection, since, after a lapse of some three thousand years, the two colossal statues of King Amenhotep III, to whom it refers, may still be seen gazing stolidly and immutably eastward across the broad reaches of the Theban Plain.

The following graphic description of the now vanished building itself, a literal translation from the original hieroglyphic, is the last entry in my diary, the last for many a long day, I may add. Further, and for an excellent reason, this last entry was never completed. The translation runs in the following somewhat grandiloquent and semi-poetic vein: "It hath been given me to set up in a holy place two great statues

A Fall Down Thirty Centuries 21

of the Son of Ra, Amenhotep, Conqueror of Asia. These are they which stand before the entrance portal of the Mortuary Temple of His Majesty (Life, Stability and Health to him). Carved from solid blocks of the hard grit-stone of On, they tower seventy feet into the air. Their golden headdresses touch the very dome of heaven. On either side, gold-capped obelisks of red granite reach high above the temple pylons. Four cedar flag-staffs tipped with gold rise from grooves cut in the sculptured sandstone of the temple front. The walls of the temple are carved and richly painted with scenes representing the Asiatic conquests of Pharaoh, Lord of Might. Its great bronze doors are inlaid in gold with the figure of the God Min of Coptos. Through this jeweled outline of his 'double' twice daily doth the Great God enter the Holy Sanctuary, there to partake of the offerings spread upon its jeweled altars. In his honor are the ceilings covered with true lazuli of Babylon, its floors enriched with silver and sprinkled with powdered turquoise. Its

gleaming walls are engraved with designs representing the New Year's procession of the Sun Barque, from the Northern to the Southern Apt. Beside the High Altar stands a tablet thirty feet in height, covered with gold and inlaid with sard and emerald. Thus is marked 'The-Place-Where-His-Majesty-Stands-at-the-Sacrificing.' Beq, son of Beq, carved the statues and erected the obelisks. Renney, the Syrian, overlaid and enriched the tablet."

Inserted here was a drawing of the above mentioned tablet, and, upon it, the following additional fragment: "Memorial-tablet found face downwards. I enclose drawings and translations. Evidently *mine* is a very ancient *name*? All traces of —."

Here the diary abruptly stops!

Now, I directly trace the mishap which thereafter befell me to the discovery of this same tablet.

A hot day spent in transcribing to paper its mud-filled inscriptions, and a night devoted to their decipherment, might well have driven me

A Fall Down Thirty Centuries 23

forth in search of the cool breezes to be found along the higher slopes of the nearby Libyan Hills.

Yet, in this connection, I must not forget to mention the contents of a newspaper-clipping sent me by Gardiner just before he left Alexandria, a clipping which seems to have a peculiar meaning, especially in the light of the curious experiences which I shall presently relate.

This clipping was found folded carefully in the page of my Diary opposite that last incomplete entry to which I have referred.

Beneath a date and the words "Sphinx, Cairo," the latter added in Gardiner's spidery script, there appear the following extraordinary paragraphs: "In the Museum of the Louvre there is a mummy, Catalogue No. 49. It is the mummy of a woman, and is said to have been found in one of the Tombs of the Queens, southwest of the Theban acropolis. The man who found it was crushed to death within twenty-four hours after he had touched it, and his as-

sistants who hauled it up from the tombshaft died within a few weeks. Three of the carriers who handled it on the Nile boat died within a short space of time, and one of the men who unpacked it at Paris died in great agony within less than a week after he had played his part in the work of getting it to its destination. All these were seemingly natural deaths, but it is odd that all the men whose fingers touched the mummy should have died so soon after the handling. The body of the unknown appears to have been interred with all the elaboration prescribed for *Queens of the Royal-Blood!* The work of the casemaker was careful in the extreme. Both granite coffin and gold-covered casing were of unusual quality and richness. The many gem-incrustations, with which the gold cases were inlaid, were similarly of the richest and rarest materials. Yet, the name of Meryt, that of a minor priestess of the Temple, found beneath the pitch which had been smeared upon the outer casings, seemed to prove conclusively that the body was that of one of the

chantresses of the Temple of Sekhmet at Karnak.

“But, following the unwinding of the aromatic wrappings which swathed the body, the curator in charge was surprised to find a second inscription. This indicated that the mummy was that of Queen Hanit, the first wife of Amenhotep the Third, whom the King put aside in favor of Thi, a beautiful Syrian. You may recall how Queen Thi, following Hanit’s incarceration in the great Temple of Sekhmet, is supposed to have instigated the death of Hanit’s son, the true heir to the throne, at the hands of Menna, a favorite of hers. Of the further history of Lady Hanit I personally know nothing.”

Along the margin Gardiner had added: “I send this to you, Ranney, knowing your interest in the period which the name of Hanit suggests. Can you unravel the mystery surrounding the mummy of this Queen who is not a Queen?”

“In regard to the sudden taking off of the seven workmen, and, by the way, the curator is now dead, I can hear you expatiate at length

upon the fearful '*hekau-spells*' and '*magic incantations*' of the ancients!

"Once more I ask you to prove to me that your ancients ever possessed such powers, or if they did, that they could by any possible chance have survived the wear and tear of three thousand years! And, meanwhile, allow me to submit myself, your unbelieving friend!"

I smile even now, as I shake my head at Gardiner's careless words.

What can I but think? Childish, you say! A series of remarkable coincidences! Wait!

It was from Burton that I first heard an account of what he and the other members of the expedition supposed, and rightly, had happened to me.

It seemed that I left my tent about dawn and started for one of my favorite walks westward, taking the general direction of a certain lofty spur of the deep red Libyan Hills. This jutting ledge immediately overhung the ruins of King Mentu-hotep's temple. So close a part of the towering cliff is this sadly mutilated structure

A Fall Down Thirty Centuries 27

that one might easily slip from the shelf above and fall directly upon the great stone passageway which conducts to the inner chamber.

To this somewhat dangerous vantage-point, I had sometimes taken distinguished visitors to our camp, people who had come with letters from friends at home, or those who I felt sure would be willing to put up with the discomforts of a night spent beyond the walls of the luxurious Winter Palace Hotel.

I think I may say truthfully, that not one of my visitors failed of being more than repaid for any trifling discomfort which was theirs, since few scenes can equal, certainly none surpass, the view presented by the extended vista north, south and eastward across the winding Nile Valley towards Karnak, Luxor, and the deep blue Eastern Hills.

But to return to my story. That memorable morning the fever must assuredly have had me well within its clutches. Since, of that early morning walk, I remember but a single incident—Heaven knows, I am never likely to forget it—

a great black void into which I suddenly pitched, a horrible tingling in all my veins, a shock and a myriad of little flames that seemed to burst from my very eyeballs!

Was I conscious, I asked myself? I must be, for I seemed to realize at once what a dreadful thing had happened to me.

Of course, I knew I had pitched headlong into the open mouth of one of those rock-hewn tombs with which the tumbled slopes below the Libyan Hills are perforated. Well might those crumbling hills been named a honey-comb of death!

I could not move; my whole body seemed numb. By gazing upward I found that I could see the stars! Yes, I recognized the star of Hathor, in all her radiant beauty.

How my head ached! How my ears roared! Worse than all was the agony of a ceaseless throb-throb, beat-beat, at the back of my head.

It was as though someone were hitting me with a hammer, rhythmically, relentlessly.

Perhaps after all I *was* dead?

A Fall Down Thirty Centuries 29

No, there were the sharp outlines of the tomb-shaft and the stars above!

I wonder whose tomb it is? Is it charted? Oh, will that throbbing never stop? Won't someone come? Help! Help!

As if in answer to my cry, high above me I saw a queer, yet strikingly familiar figure, a figure silhouetted black against the sky.

The figure leaned over and gazed downwards into the shaft. I noticed its long and thickly curled wig.

"Ha, ha! A wig of the New Empire," said I to myself.

Its owner's face I could not see, but he—or she—yes, it was a woman, peered long and earnestly into the gloomy depths of the shaft where I lay.

Suddenly, and as though through the medium of some unnatural light, her face was revealed.

"I was right," thought I. "*It is a woman, and by her robes, a woman of the New Empire!*"

But what features, what an expression! Never shall I forget it. A face of the most exotic beauty; of a type I knew instantly. It could only have belonged to one of the ladies of the house of Amenhotep the Magnificent! Such a face the Royal Sculptor Beq might carve, or Amenhotep, Superintendent of the Royal Craftsmen.

The beautiful apparition addressed me in the soft tones of the educated Egyptian.

I found that I could rise without difficulty at her bidding. Struggling to my feet I pushed a stone at the side of the tomb chamber and passed through a narrow false door which opened as my hand pressed the secret block. I found myself once more out under the sunset glow.

All this seemed perfectly natural to me. But, I remember thinking how strange it was that I should find the pyramids of the Antefs and Mentuhoteps, the sphinx-lined Causeways, and the many Mortuary Temples hereabouts, standing clearly defined against the hills, and seem-

ingly in all their original beauty. Nay, the very cypresses, palms, karobs and myrrh trees which flanked the ivory-toned Causeway leading to Queen Hatshep-sut's Temple, were to be seen nodding gracefully in the evening breeze.

My gaze fell questionably upon the smiling face of my adorable savior.

She must have remarked my bewilderment. Yet, without a word she turned and started swiftly toward a small white house half-concealed in a dense grove of feathery acacias.

In response to a quick gesture on the part of my guide, I pulled back the wooden bolt and opened the door. A tall and strikingly handsome Egyptian arose from an ivory-inlaid stool as I entered. Carefully rolling up a manuscript which he had been reading by the light of an oil lamp, and without otherwise appearing to notice me, he took from the table nearby a blue glazed goblet, handed it to my rescuer, and re-seated himself.

Once again he picked up the discarded manuscript and continued his reading as though

nothing had happened to interrupt his train of thought.

Perhaps, after all, I had been expected! I heard my charming guide utter the one softly sibilant Egyptian word: *Drink!*

I lifted the bright blue goblet to my lips and drank deeply, thirstily. . . .

CHAPTER III

ENANA, THE MAGICIAN, WOULD PROVE THAT A RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN A QUEEN AND A PRIESTESS MAY BE TURNED TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

THE sloping walls of the Temple of Amenra loomed black and forbidding against the pallid light of early morning.

The tall cedar flag-poles fronting the entrance pylons and the gold-capped shafts of the four granite obelisks seemed carved in ebony, so sharply were their dark lines defined.

No sound came from within; no life was apparent in the wide domain of cultivated fields which surrounded the temple on three sides. There was no sign of life upon the temple barges moored to the sandstone landing at the temple front.

A long line of cranes flew slowly, noiselessly, across the moon, now rapidly sinking into the

blue haze which floated above the Western Hills.

Within the temple precinct, in a small chamber lit by the fitful light of a six-wicked lamp which swung out from the wall at the end of a pole, a restless figure bent from time to time above a form stretched at length upon a high couch.

The figure was that of a woman, a woman dead and to a certain extent disfigured by the scalpel and fat-extracting implements of the embalmer who now bent over her.

On a low bench beside him were spread out the many bronze and flint utensils of his craft.

Kathi, the Embalmer, made the last great incision. With a long, flat and minutely serrated flint knife, he laid open a good six inches of the flesh immediately above the heart. Having extracted that organ he carefully placed it in an alabaster jar filled almost to the brim with aromatic spirits. On top of the jar he set the cover, a cover crowned with a tinted portrait-head of the deceased. Three similar jars containing the

viscera, brains and other organs liable to rapid decay, had already been hermetically sealed.

So quickly comes the dawn in Egypt that, by this time, one could readily distinguish the inscription in letters of dark blue which symmetrically filled a square at the shoulder of each vase:

“An oblation which the King bestows to the Royal Spouse, His Beloved, Hanit, Triumphant. Ten thousand oxen and fowl, ten thousand jars of wine, ten thousand loaves of bread, funerary raiment for the rewrapping of this body, all things pure and good for the soul of the deceased Queen, His Beloved, the Lady Hanit, Justified of God.”

Being at one and the same time Embalmer to the King, Chief Surgeon and Magician, as he macerated the shriveled flesh, Kathi recited the prescribed Ritual from the Book of the Dead and consecrated the many amuletic jewels and pendants with which he now proceeded to decorate the body.

Each limb received at his hand the anointing that rendered it incorruptible and the magical charms and incantations that should sustain the spark of life.

This done, Kathi placed a heavy amulet in the cavity whence he had extracted the heart, a great emerald beetle, inscribed beneath with a prayer for justification and absolution addressed to the Judge of the Dead, Osiris.

It did not enter Kathi's head that he was trying to dupe Osiris by thus inserting a heavy stone heart in place of the real organ. Kathi merely wished to be sure that the heart would tip the scales against the great God's "Feather of Truth," when the deceased was led into the Hall of the Underworld for Judgment.

Having placed the emerald heart in position, the Embalmer set a long oval plaque of gold immediately above it, drew together the clean-cut flesh and sewed up the wound.

A small iron amulet, the Two Fingers of Horus, he placed in the hand, and the delicate jewels of the deceased, chains of minute

carnelian emerald, garnet and amethyst pendants, he strung about the throat. Low upon the breast he placed a beaded *wesekh*, a broad jeweled pectoral ornament which, more than a thousand years before his time, King Kufu had called *the national ornament* of his people. Upon the head he set one of the huge pleated wigs of the day, confining it with a diadem of gold decorated at intervals with gold lotus flowers in high relief. Gold earrings of rosette form were set in the ears, broad jeweled bands slipped upon the arms, wrists and ankles, and Kathi, the Embalmer, commenced to wrap the body in the first few score feet of aromatic linen bandages.

The Embalmer rested a moment, hand on hip. Humming absently to himself he turned to trim the spluttering lamp. It was an occupation which consumed altogether too much of his time.

Kathi's back being turned for a moment, he failed to see the bent figure of Enana, the Magician, who glided into the dimly lit room.

"Thou hast succeeded, son of Kathi?"

At his repressed but high-pitched voice, Kathi, son of Kathi, swung about, startled for an instant out of his wonted calm and immobility. He turned to close the door before replying. "As thou sayest, Holiness, I have succeeded. 'Tis but a few short minutes since Thi and Menna stood where thou standest at this very moment. The Syrian shed real tears above the body of that poor wench there. To her 'twas Hanit, doubt not." Kathi smiled somewhat sadly as he gazed down upon the figure at his feet: "In death the Lady Meryt's striking resemblance to Hanit, our beloved Queen, was most pronounced. And, following my work upon the head, the Lady Meryt's own mother could hardly have chosen between them."

"I noted a hint of suspicion in Menna's eyes the moment he entered the room. Yet, this instantly vanished, when once he had looked upon the body. He smiled. Menna no longer fears that Hanit will take vengeance for the murder of her son. To Menna, as to Thi, the body is that of Hanit. Their triumph seems to

them assured. Hanit and Wazmes, her son, are dead. Thi's son reigns! The Syrian sun-god triumphs over Amen!"

Enana, Chief Magician of the Temple of Amen, rubbed together his lean and shriveled hands. His experiment seemed well on the road to success.

A Pharaoh might set aside one queen for another; the late Pharaoh had done that. He might depose a queen of the line of the sun-god Ra in favor of Thi, a Syrian, a commoner. Beguiled by the latter's crafty wiles he might close his eyes to the murder of an inconvenient son or so. 'Twas harem work that! But, to strike at the great God Amenra whom Enana served—that was a different matter!

Thi, the Queen-Mother, was a foreigner, an idolator. The present Chancellor was also a Syrian, Yakab of Rabbath.

Was it to be wondered at that the present Pharaoh, Thi's son, was daily urged to overthrow the gods whom Egypt worshiped in favor of Aton, the *Syrian* god?

But what then would become of the great gods Amen, Ptah and Khonsu; of Osiris, Isis, Horus, and a host of deities worshiped through countless ages along the valley of the Nile? And last, but well to the fore in Enana's vision, what would become of the innumerable priests, himself included, who served those powerful gods?

Yes! Menna could strangle Hanit's only son, the lawful heir; Thi could seek to poison Hanit! But, touch the cult of Amen of Thebes and, at a word, the great priestly hierarchy throughout Egypt would rise as one man.

So, at least, thought Enana. So too Huy, First Prophet of Amen, his brother, and so Kathi, the Embalmer, their hireling.

If it was to resolve itself into a clash between Court and Temple (and, certainly, recent events had pointed to a rupture) Enana and the Prophets of Amen were ready.

Enana's small black eyes fixed themselves upon those of the Embalmer who perceptibly cringed. He laid one thin hand upon Kathi's shoulder: "Son of Kathi, thy skill is that of thy

revered father (peace in Aaru be his), nay, more excellent! For what man was ever called upon to do the work that thou hast done?" Enana pointed to the figure lying half-concealed in the shadows of the room. "Verily in thee hath Amen a faithful follower, one whose reward shall surely find him.

"Listen, son of Kathi. The long-expected hour has come. Pharaoh, Thi and the Syrians about them can no longer conceal their plan to bring about a civil war. Jealous of our power, Thi and Yakab have decided to challenge the supremacy of all-mighty Amen. The priesthood of Egypt is to be overthrown. Hook-nosed Syrians and Canaanites are to be installed in our stead, and our beloved banks of Hapi are to be overrun with the kinsmen of Yakab, the Chancellor, may the twenty-four demigods blast him!

"Yet, mark my words, son of Kathi. Though Aton seem to triumph yet, in the end, shall Amen find his own. Though all the powers of the conjurers of Amen be counted in vain, yet shall Amen triumph through Enana, his ser-

vant. More I cannot tell thee at this time. Yet, through troublous days to come, remember my words."

With a muttered farewell the aged Magician shuffled off down the narrow acacia-bordered path which led to the landing-stage by the side of the river.

Kathi stood watching Enana's bent figure until it disappeared down the sandstone steps which led to the ferry.

Like Enana, his master, Kathi was above all a devoted follower of the great god Amen, whose worship the Queen-Mother now sought to destroy.

Yet, of late, there had been many moments such as this when Kathi had felt the bow-string at his throat, the arms of the strangler about his neck. Kings deal harshly with conspirators and Kathi, the Embalmer, whose horizon might well be said to have been circumscribed by death, feared to die.

Kathi's fears were somewhat dissipated at sight of the onrushing sun-god, now vaulting

higher and higher above the rosy Eastern Hills. He stretched forth his hands, palms upward, in that appealing attitude of prayer so suggestive of a spiritual offering.

On the river below him the boatmen burst into the Hymn to Ra at his Rising, which had been first sung by the Sage and Prophet Imhotep, two thousand years before their time!

Nature, too, added her welcome to the nurturing sun-god. The falcons sailed in great circles above the flashing waters of the river. To their shrill and quavering notes, intermingled with the joyous twitterings and flutterings back and forth of other birds, there was added the soft lowing of the sacred cows and the shrill chattering of the apes belonging to the Temple of Mut in Asheru.

Beams of light seemed to dance upon the gold caps of the lofty obelisks. Huge streamers rose upon the flag-poles which fronted the great portal of the sun-god's mightiest temple.

Along the walls of the temple of the deified King Thomes, a phyle of chanting priests

moved slowly, the *keri heb* with his tube-like censer at their head. Kathi found it next to impossible to believe that a hideous civil war was about to burst upon such peace as this.

Kathi shook his head. He turned once more to his unfinished task within.

CHAPTER IV

HOW BHANAR CAME TO THEBES

IT was about the third hour of the auspicious sixteenth day of Athyr. On the river a high-prowed galley of foreign cut could be seen attempting to gain the western landing under her own sail. This great sail, picturesquely marked with broad stripes of green and dull red, spread itself to the fitful breeze with but little effect.

Suddenly a raucous command rang out. At once, as if the command had been momentarily expected, twenty oars were thrust out from the vessel's sides, twenty lusty throats called aloud upon the name of some god or beneficent demon, and at each shout the great blades took the water and the vessel sprang shoreward, a line of bubbles and swirling eddies in her wake.

A pilot stood at prow and stern. The bow pilot held a mooring-stake and mallet ready in his hand. A pair of buffers already hung over

the vessel's sides. It was often a dangerous matter to pick a path through the many barges, war-galleys, sea-going vessels and lesser river craft which were strung out as far as the eye could see along the western bank of the Nile.

"By Hathor," said Nakht, a fieldhand, as he fixed his tired eyes upon the oncoming galley, "a man who can scull, row, and swim as can I, should have a place upon some such vessel. Think of the life those dirty Amu lead!" All foreigners were Amu to Nakht, sand-dwellers and loathed for their filthy habits and the lice that covered them.

"Aye, Nakht! Thou mayest well envy them. Think of the days and nights in port, ever with gold *uten* to spend. Think of Thethi's wine, Aua's dancing girls, a brawl with the city watchmen—more damned foreigners!

"Ai, ai! Once I knew it well! See this scar. 'Twas Thethi himself gave it me. We were young men then, both as quick as southern panthers.

"Breath of Ra! How many maidens and

hapless youths think you Baltu brings to Thebes this trip?"

A sharp blow from the staff of the overseer cut short this soliloquy. Once again began the splashing of waters mingled with the droning song of the irrigation worker: "Life to this seed, O Waters, Breath of Osiris, Blood of Isis! Life to these our seedlings that we may eat and live to sing thy praises."

The galley drifted slowly to the bank. The oars were drawn in; the great steering-oars alone guided her.

The emblem at the prow of the vessel showed her to hail from Tyre. Her freight, as Nakht had hinted, consisted in the main of hapless youths and maidens torn from the arms of their murdered parents, enveigled from their homes by false promises or bought outright in foreign slave-marts.

Among the jostling crowds gathered upon the embankment and overlooking the clustered vessels, stood Renny, the Syrian. His gaze was fixed upon the forms of two little children busily

occupied in modeling dolls from the plastic Nile mud of the river bank. The children's occupation had interested him since Renny, the Syrian, was a sculptor.

Renny was startled out of his state of artistic introspection by the harsh voices of a number of the foreign sailors. They had jumped ashore from the Tyrian galley and now sought to jostle their way up the steep and crowded bank.

While these swarthy adventurers drove in the mooring-stake, Renny's eyes roamed along the deck of the galley itself. As he gazed at the ordered cases of merchandise, which had but recently been brought up on deck preparatory to their unloading, three figures emerged from a cabin door placed toward the stern of the vessel.

Renny instantly decided that the first of the three, a huge man heavily bearded and with a commanding eye and voice of thunder, was the master and probable owner of the vessel. The second was a dainty youth, of a nation unknown to Renny; the third a woman, by her robes a Syrian like himself.

The merchant made some remark in a tongue unknown to Renny and, at the same time, pointed shoreward. The trembling youth replied by throwing the long sleeve of his rich robe over his head, a gesture indicative of grief or despair.

But Renny was far more interested in the figure of the Syrian, his countrywoman.

What heartless parent had sold that drooping figure into harsh captivity? What disastrous war had resulted in her present plight? Or had this hook-nosed Semite filched her from her nest high up above some gentle Syrian valley?

The sculptor's heart ached for her. Thoughts of his own beloved vineyard flashed through his mind. For an instant he visualized the purple hills which encircled Ribba, his native village, the clear blue sky, the sparkling stream, his father's white-walled house and the little temple which stood, well nigh hidden, near the edge of an ancient grove.

Poor little exile! Never had Renny so longed for power, for heavy golden *uten*, as he did at

that moment. Instinctively he gripped the single bar that encircled his left wrist. He smiled sadly. Fifty, nay, a hundred such, might not buy her freedom, and this single golden bar represented the fruits of two years' untiring labor under the patronage of a great, if capricious, noble.

Suddenly his gaze riveted itself more intently upon the drooping figure of the Syrian woman. It could not be! Yes! He knew her! 'Twas Bhanar, a maid of Ribba, of Ribba itself, his dear Syrian village!

Could his eyes have played him false? He sauntered carelessly toward the Phoenician vessel. Yes! It was Bhanar, playmate of his boyhood, Bhanar whom his dead sister had loved so devotedly.

In vain he sought to attract her attention. Finally, through an inspiration, Renny turned towards the east and gave the shrill cry of the Syrian hillmen when danger threatened.

The effect was instantaneous. Bhanar's drooping form slowly raised itself. Astonish-

ment, joy and instant recognition passed rapidly over her beautiful face.

She had seen him; she knew him! With a warning gesture Renny slowly reclimbed the embankment.

How to save her? To whom could he turn for help?

His master—the noble Menna? Small hope there! The Queen-Mother, herself a Syrian? Yes, he would attempt to reach the ear of the powerful Queen-Mother herself!

To do so, he must act quickly. Yakab, her Syrian chancellor, should be seen and quickly. Yakab was an importation of the Queen-Mother, and a favorite of hers.

Renny found Yakab seated beside the pool in his garden. He affected to be absorbed in a game of draughts with his youngest daughter.

In a few hurried words Renny acquainted him with the plight of their countrywoman and begged his instant help. He drew the golden bracelet from his wrist but Yakab, smiling, stopped him.

The latter rose and in a few short words set Renny's mind at rest.

In fact, within the minute, they had parted at Yakab's stucco gate, Yakab to take a short cut to the palace, Renny to take his way along the river bank toward the vast estates of Menna, the Royal Superintendent, his exalted protector.

CHAPTER V

THE PLEASURE BARGE OF THI, THE QUEEN-MOTHER

DURING his reign, Pharaoh Amenhotep, the Magnificent, had set aside or infringed upon many an established precedent or custom. It almost seemed as if he had thus sought to prove to his subjects his utter infatuation for Thi, the Syrian, his second wife.

For the late Pharaoh had done nothing without Thi's cooperation. Though of common extraction, her name and titles had appeared upon all state documents beside his own. This was at once a new and a radical innovation.

Amenhotep's infatuation for the beautiful Thi had produced, among many other marvels, a vast pleasure lake, an artificial body of water, which now stretched its placid reaches on three sides of the villa-palace of the former monarch. This

villa was now occupied by Thi and the new Pharaoh, her son.

About the banks of the broad lake waved feathery acacia, sweet scented mimosa, marsh flowers, and tall papyrus plants. Upon its pellucid waters rested white and blue lotus flowers. Great cranes, pink and white flamingos and pure white ibises pecked leisurely among the lily pads or spread their wings to dry in the rays of the late afternoon sun.

A sheltered landing-stage opened on a causeway whose granite flagging led up to the door of the palace, the Per-aoh or "Great House" as both the palace and its august master were called. To the left of this causeway stood a small building set apart by the art-loving Pharaoh for experiments in glass and fayence. To the right lay the series of rooms reserved to Auta, the Royal Sculptor, and his pupils. Counted among the latter were the then reigning Pharaoh, Akhten-aton, and Noferith, his wife.

Akhten-aton has a great admiration for his

valiant ancestor Thothmes, third of the name. He counted among his most prized possessions a gold goblet said to have been designed and fashioned by the hand of that gifted Pharaoh.

All Egyptians knew how well the hand of the great "Conqueror of Asia" had wielded the curved sword of Amen, and with what marvelous results alike for the enrichment of Egypt and for the prestige of her name. Few had ever guessed that Thothmes' rare moments of relaxation had been spent in the studio of his Chief Goldsmith.

To-day, Akhten-noferu, the "pleasure barge" of the Queen, was drawn up beside the landing-stage in anticipation of Thi's arrival.

Less than a hundred cubits in length, its cedar beams were covered throughout with thin plates of pure gold. Its linen sail was ornamented with squares of blue and red. The blades of the light cedar oars were tipped with silver; the two great steering-oars were entirely sheathed in the same bright metal. A portrait head of the late Pharaoh was carved upon the handle of

each of the steering-oars. Two elongated eyes at the prow of the barge were inlaid with alabaster and deep Babylonian lazuli. The name of the vessel appeared inlaid in pale green emerald from Suan in the south. In the after part of the vessel a low dais was covered with red and blue checkered tapestry, to match the great sail.

With half-suppressed giggles of excitement and whispered jests, the "sailors" now appeared. Noisily trooping down the causeway they took their places at the oar benches, as their leader indicated. Their leader, Princess Sesen, was as amusingly disguised as her "sailors," the handmaidens of the Queen-Mother herself.

Queen Thi now appeared. As her short figure passed from the dark shadows of the passage into the glare of day, two ebony black Nubians dropped in an arch above her large and profusely curled wig, a pair of ostrich-feather sunshades dyed in brilliant tones of red and blue. The servants fell prostrate at sight of her and so remained, muttering wishes for "long life

and health," until she was safely seated upon her gilded cedar chair, and a cushion placed at her feet by little Ata, youngest of her maidens.

At her approach the "sailors" had been silenced by a warning gesture from the Princess.

Suddenly the momentary decorum of these little maids was interrupted by a wailing cry from one of their number, who, without apparent reason, burst into a violent fit of weeping.

For a few moments she was unable to explain the reason of her distress. But finally, her sisters gathered that her turquoise pendant had slipped from her neck and fallen into the water. This pendant, a gift from the Princess herself, the tearful little maiden vowed she must have. She could not row, she would not row, until it was found.

After much delay her fears were somewhat allayed by the Chief Eunuch, who promised to send for Enana, the Magician. Enana's incantations would soon bring to the surface her

missing jewel. He promised that she would find it awaiting her when the barge returned to the landing-stage. Thus, in part reassured, little Thutu dried her eyes and again bent over her oar in anticipation of the signal to start.

A trumpeter in the prow blew a shrill note upon his long instrument (a new importation from Syria), a group of singing women from the temple of Sekhmet burst into song; Rahotep, the Chief Eunuch, clapped his fat hands; the ropes were cast off, and the forty maidens dipped their light cedar oars in the placid waters. The barge "Beauties of the Sun Disc" drew out slowly into the dancing waters of the lake.

Seated in the shadow of the great checkered sail, Queen Thi smiled her appreciation of the novel surprise which her maidens had prepared for her. As the vessel drew out through the nodding lotus flowers Kema's flute made soft music which seemed to mingle with the pearling ripples of the waters. Kema, it seems, played the flute so well that the cranes and water-fowl

often lit upon the sides of the barge to hear him.

Queen Thi was not aware that novel entertainments such as this had been customary with the Egyptian court from days immemorial. She was now to hear of just such a method of distraction as had been practiced under the great Egyptian monarch Senefru, who had lived, died and been laid to rest, high up in his colossal pyramid, some twenty centuries before her time.

For Sianekh, the story-teller, suddenly appeared and seated herself upon the deck in front of the Queen's chair. As was her custom, she neglected both the prostration and the formulæ of greeting. Sianekh was a privileged character at Court, a favorite with the late King, both on account of her inexhaustible fund of stories and because of the fact that Pepi, her husband, had lost his life while defending his royal master from the attack of a wounded lion.

Yes! Thi's obese and indolent husband, the late Pharaoh, had once been inordinately fond of lion-hunting. One hundred and two lions he had killed with his own arrows. One had gone

down upon the very expedition so fatal to his chariot-driver, Pepi. But it was the last animal of that great hunt which had sent Sianekh's husband to the Valley of Shadows. Pharaoh never forgot Pepi's sacrifice. Pepi's tomb never lacked its offerings of beer, wine and milk, flesh and fowl or of fresh white linens for the rewrapping of his mummy.

Sianekh, the story-teller, slipped from the sleeve of her loose white mantle a small ebony wand tipped with electrum.

Without preamble she commenced a tale of King Senefru's days, a tale of the epoch of those gods of old, the pyramid-builders.

In her monotonous singsong she told how the good king, tired with the cares of state and oppressed by the great heat of noonday, sought a cool spot in which to rest, and found it not. How his son flew upstream in the fleetest royal barge in search of a famous magician. How he found him fishing in the Nile without a hook, and finally persuaded him to come to his father's court.

She told of the wonders performed there by the aged seer. Of wine turned to honey. Of bees which went into a little hive only to emerge as brilliantly colored birds resembling those of distant Punt. Of the goose's head which he restored to its body so that it sprang once more to its feet and rushed cackling and hissing from their midst.

Finally she told of Senefru's pleasure-barge, of the little maidens who rowed it and of one of their number who dropped her pendant into the water, even as had Thutu, and of the magician of old who parted the waters and descended dryshod to the finding of the pendant.

"But see, O Queen. Enough of the doings of the ancients. There is the tablet to the faithful Nakht, a hero of our own day and generation." Sianekh pointed to a tall shaft which rose high above the bank. "That tall shaft marks the stake where Nakht met his death. The story goes that Isis, only daughter of the Vizier Rames, made an appointment to meet the son of Nakht at this spot. Yonder inlet was filled to

overflowing with the waters of the inundation. But Nakht, son of Nakht, rather than abandon his tryst, let the swirling waters of the inundation flow over his devoted head. Isis threw herself into the waters with him. To this date lovers hang garlands about the shaft and breathe a prayer to Hathor for sons and daughters like Nakht and Isis."

As Sianekh rose to her feet the Queen thanked her and presented her with a pair of gold earrings which she unfastened from her own ears, an unheard of honor, and one which even the story-teller appreciated.

The Eunuchs showed their approbation by loud cries of affected astonishment, for the stories were not new to them. But the little maidens, who had rested on their oars during the recital, showed their keen delight in the tales by frequent "oh's" and "ah's" of astonishment and approval scattered throughout the telling.

On the barge the hours slipped by unnoted. To Yakab the Chancellor, who now anxiously

awaited the return of the Queen, each minute seemed an hour.

Yakab had hurried off to acquaint the Queen of Bhanar's plight, and to beg her to come to the assistance of one of her unfortunate country-women.

Hour after hour Yakab was compelled to sit beneath the striped awning which fronted the palace door. Hour after hour he pretended to listen to the doorkeeper's account of his exploits amidst the Nubian goldfields, in the arid Turquoise Country, among the hills of Mitanni or beyond the Great Bend of the Euphrates.

Pentaur, the Doorkeeper, had served three successive Pharaohs. Already was he popularly supposed to have exceeded the one hundred and ten years customarily prayed for by all pious Egyptians. Yet, Pentaur seemed to have the key to some mysterious *hekau*-charm, which kept his well-worn teeth in his head, his deep-set eyes clear and his head erect. Though Pentaur walked with a jackal-headed cane, it was from choice, and not necessity.

Like all men, Pentaur had his failings. Next to the somewhat colored recital of his own travels and successes, Pentaur loved to recount the exploits, narrow escapes and journeyings of his famous ancestor and namesake, Pentaur, companion and histographer of that greatest of all Pharaohs, Thothmes the Great. As he listened, perforce, to this garrulous descendant of Pentaur, Yakab wondered if it had indeed been the fiery Thothmes who had crushed Nubia and the whole of Asia, or whether the first Pentaur had not in point of fact been the true instrument of Pharaoh's worldwide successes.

Yet, much of what the Doorkeeper said of his ancestor was true. Was not Pentaur the Historian's account of Pharaoh's exploits written in good hieroglyphic and graphically pictured upon the walls of Amen's temple nearby? Indeed, Pentaur, the Doorkeeper, had good cause for his pride of ancestry.

The weary Yakab was on the point of relinquishing his long vigil when the notes of a trumpet announced the return of the royal barge. Soon after Pentaur sent in Yakab's

crumpled note to the Queen-Mother's apartment.

Once the acknowledgment was in his hands, Yakab picked up his long staff and rose to depart. As his gaunt form passed beneath the outer pylon, Pentaur motioned him back to the ebony stool. Pentaur considered Yakab an excellent conversationalist, for the reason, perhaps, that Pentaur's flow of anecdote had not once been interrupted.

But Yakab smilingly shook his head. He could not resist following up his heart-felt expressions of farewell with a sarcastic prayer for the repose of the souls of Pentaur's ancestry, as far as he could recall it, commencing with Den, one of the valiant "Followers of Horus" of the days of the gods.

Yakab feared that he had failed a member of his race. He had been too late. Yakab loved riches; Yakab loved power. But, above all else, Yakab loved his home, his family, his people. And was not Bhanar one of his people?

That night Yakab could not sleep.

CHAPTER VI

HOW BHANAR FOUND A HOME IN EGYPT

BALTU the Phoenician left his bales of merchandise and returned to the side of the trembling Bhanar. Erdu, his steersman could count the bales as well as he. As each tenth bale passed over the vessel's side, Erdu sang out the tally. He checked it with a mark upon a piece of potsherd which he held in his hand.

Misunderstanding the signs of excitement which appeared in the face of the trembling Bhanar, following Renny's signal, the Phoenician merchant sought to interest her in the sights about her. In a few moments she would be off his hands forever. She must not be allowed to break down at this juncture.

In a voice which he sought to make sympathetic Baltu pointed out the wonders of the Western Bank.

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 67

He named the builders of the various temples, shrines and gold-capped obelisks; the owners of the more important villas whose gardens lined the river bank. He even attempted to give some chronological sequence to the intricate maze of rockhewn tombs which rose, vast and imposing, from the edge of the Theban Plain to a point high up beneath the crumbling cliffs of the western hills.

Yet, Bhanar found little of interest in her surroundings. Her eyes dwelt fearfully upon the treeless hills, upon the mud-walled villages and gloomy temples. She noted that each and all of the Theban temples were guarded from the eyes of mortals by high and forbidding walls of solid masonry.

How different was this to the hospitality of her own little temple, whose snowy colonnades were open to every passerby; its great wooden doors thrown open from sunrise to sunset! Again, in contradistinction to these sun-baked hills her native village nestled in an olive grove, its encircling hills were green with pastures and

crowned with thickly growing trees. At this very season its fields were yellow with the fragrant Syrian crocus. Over all was a sky blue as a turquoise, an atmosphere pure and limpid. How different from the blazing heat of Egypt and that great throbbing cauldron of molten brass which the Egyptians called their sky!

Presently she would be swallowed up in one of those forbidding temples, palaces or villas! She thought that the well of her tears had dried, yet now the tears sprang hot and blinding to her eyes.

Fearing that she might ruin his chances if she lost that soft rose coloring he so prized, to divert her Baltu led her to the cabin door and bade her robe herself to go ashore. Baltu took from his long fringed gown two small gold-capped jars of obsidian and placed them in her hands: "Descend to thy cabin, my Rose-bud. Bid Darman let down that glossy hair of thine. Let her sprinkle a little of this perfumed oil and gold dust upon it. The oil is more precious than the gold. Let her not waste a drop. Now

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 69

haste thee, my Syrian Crocus! We go ashore immediately."

Soon Bhanar was arrayed in a cream-colored robe, a golden girdle encircled her slender waist, a diadem gleamed in her perfumed hair.

Darman stood back to admire the effect of her ministrations. Darman, like Bhanar, snatched from some distant village, was short, fat and continually sniffing or weeping outright. She had often assured Bhanar, as indeed she had assured other unfortunates whom it had been her lot to serve in a like capacity, that the love and devotion which she bore her, alone prevented her from throwing herself overboard.

In the present case it may well have been the truth, for Darman had conceived an utter infatuation for the beautiful Syrian. On the contrary, Darman loathed her loud-voiced master, though her abject fear of him was cause for jest with the whole crew, including Baltu himself.

In spite of her threats to do away with herself Darman had now spent six years upon the Tyrian's vessel. During this time she had pre-

pared hundreds of timorous maidens for their first, and last, appearance upon the slave-traders' dais. When the owner grew tired of his new plaything, like the playthings of infancy, it disappeared. No one knew whither, no one cared.

Bhanar reappeared on deck to find Baltu in the act of teasing the unfortunate youth, who now lay prostrate at his feet in an agony of fear and apprehension.

"Up! Dry those woman's tears, Page of Pharaoh! Dost wish a tombkeeper to purchase thee? Queen Ataho's page servitor to a mummy! Pull thyself together, boy! Otherwise"—Baltu closed his eyes, folded his hands across his chest and assumed the rigid pose of a mummy.

As his eyes opened he caught sight of the advancing Bhanar: "Astar's doves! Did I not tell thee Darman, 'A robe of cream, transparent, bordered with green and gold, dainty sandals of pink and gold, a simple gold diadem and the hair parted in the center—so!' Seen

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 71

through such Syrian byssus that rosy form proclaims thee Astar's daughter. Ah, Nebamon, what a treat for thine eyes!"

Hardly waiting for the unfortunate Hittite youth to gather himself together, Baltu, trembling with excitement and cupidity, led his two victims to the long cedar gangplank. Once on shore he pushed aside the sweating carriers, and pulling along his two charges with him, started off down the street.

Presently they passed the common slaver's block. Two brilliantly painted booths were at the moment in use. Upon one stood a stolid Nubian woman and two weeping children; upon the other a troop of half-starved Amu, whom the priests of Karnak, their original owners, were now selling.

Baltu's great fist thundered at the door of the last house southward along the waterfront. He slid back the bolt and threw open the door, waving his two charges into a narrow corridor. In a stentorian voice he shouted a command or greeting to the unseen inhabitants of the dwell-

ing and stalked off down the corridor, and then up a short flight of stairs to a room in the harem or second story.

This room turned a blank wall to the river front—as indeed did all three stories of the house—but it overlooked a broad and well-kept garden. Its painted cedar door gave upon an awning-covered balcony which immediately overlooked the customary lotus-pool. A giant sycamore spread its shady branches far and wide above the flower-dotted water.

In the shade of this aged tree Baltu's Egyptian wife, an enormously fat but strikingly handsome Theban, was taking a short walk supported on the arms of two Nubian women. Her pet gosling rested upon her capacious bosom.

At the sudden appearance of their lord and master the latter dropped Bentamen's arms and commenced dancing, clapping their hands, and sending out upon the quiet morning air the shrill "welcome cry" of their race, in which the beaming Bentamen, Baltu's spouse, attempted to join. Tears of joy the while dropped in a shower upon the head of her devoted pet.

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 73

However, Baltu had no time for greetings. In response to his directions Bentamen, supported by her maids, waddled slowly toward a little kiosk in the rear of the garden, a summer house almost buried in a circle of ragged date and dôm palm. Though in his rough way, Baltu devotedly loved his fat wife, business always consigned her to second place in her lord's heart.

During this little scene Bhanar had had time to gaze about her. The room in which they stood was decorated with painted designs of hunting scenes, boomerang-hunting amidst the marshes, a common pastime with the wealthier Egyptians. The ceiling decoration consisted of a painted band of spiral grape vines, whose dainty tendrils met and intertwined immediately above her head.

In one corner the artist had introduced a cat crouching to spring upon an unsuspecting field mouse. The latter was busily engaged in eating its way into a fat bunch of luscious purple grapes.

Puns being the Egyptian's stock in trade, his

common form of wit, the artist had scrawled in minute hieroglyphics below: "Oh, guest, whosoever thou art, what do you think of this for a vignette?"

Bhanar, it is true, could not read the inscription, but she could appreciate the charm of the little apartment, its brilliant frescoes and its floors powdered with finest white sand, gold dust, lapis lazuli and turquoise.

A scent as of some sweet pungent incense floated in the air. Scented woods from the Incense Country had been stocked in the center of the little brazier which glowed fitfully at the edge of a low dais hung with richly embroidered linen.

This dais stood well back against the eastern wall of the room. Upon it stood a light wicker-work couch, its head and back of ebony, its four high feet of ivory carved to represent panther's claws.

Clapping his hands, Baltu gave certain sharp directions to an obsequious Nubian, who appeared as if by magic at his summons. There-

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 75

after Baltu smiled, stroked his long beard and, taking a small bottle of wine from a niche in the wall, shook a few drops into the brazier. He muttered a prayer to Bar, Baal and Isis as he poured out the wine. Could his two hearers have understood his words, they would have heard the old slaver bribe his gods, foreign and Egyptian alike, with promises of rich libations, of oxen and geese, should his bait be taken at the figure he had fixed.

Baltu in this, did but follow the lead of Pharaoh himself, though Pharaoh, god incarnate, had he but paused to consider it, did but seek to bribe himself, in the person of his celestial counterpart.

Word soon spread through the mart that Baltu the Phoenician was selling, and Baltu was known as a merchant who sold nothing but the best and rarest, whether that best consisted of spices, perfumes, wines, jewels, Babylonian glass or slaves.

Baltu the Phoenician lifted a jeweled hand: "Listen, Thebans! Four months have passed

since I have gazed upon the Queen of Cities, Thebes the Glorious! During these four months I have visited Meggido, Charchemish, Tyre and Askelon. My last voyage hither brought ye true lazuli of Babylon, and precious incense from the Incense Land, the waterless land of the East!

“This time we bring ye amethysts and turquoise for your beads and bangles, malachite for the healing of your eyes, incense for your nostrils, precious oils for your anointing, or to mix with those ceremonial cones that custom bids ye place upon your graceful wigs, also”—suddenly his eyes catch the sight of the one man above all others he wished to see. He broke off and addressed the newcomer directly. “For thee, my lord Nebamon, a rose; nay, a human rose, softly pink as a rose of Naharin! Step up, great lord, *see for thyself!*” With a quick movement Baltu unloosed the gold girdle that supported the heavy robe so gracefully draped about the shrinking Bhanar.

“A rose indeed, Nebamon? Do my lord’s

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 77

lists boast a form more perfect, a skin more lustrous, hair so long, so like the ruddy gold of Nubia? Should not this damsel, this daughter of a long line of kings, be added to the royal lists? Were the great noble Menna, son of Menna, here now, would he not straightway buy the maiden? Never shall I be content until I see thee take from thy finger the seal that adds this wondrous creature to thy villa yonder."

Nebamon, typical eunuch and slave-dealer, handsome of face, obese to such an extent that the skin of his torso lay over his jeweled girdle in thick folds, Nebamon nodded his head as his great velvet eyes slowly appraised the many charms of the crouching maiden.

"Thy price, Baltu? And mark thee well! Should she turn out the shrew that fair-skinned Hittite Gadiya proved to be, she shall be returned, or never again will Baltu's galley pass the northern frontier into Egypt! May the Hound eat her, she is still upon my hands, and like to be!"

"Great lord! Could I know the Hittite for a

shrew. Remember, more than three months I had her on my book. With me, as with Darman, she was a very dove, as soft and cooing as the sacred doves of Hathor's temple yonder! Nay, have done with Gadiya; we will speak of her anon. Thou wouldst know the price of Bhanar the Beautiful, of Bhanar—a daughter of Kings? There are perhaps four whose names allow the purchase of the maid, and these be Pharaoh himself, Rames, your good Vizier, Menna, the King's Overseer, and, perhaps, thyself! One thousand gold *uten* and five hundred bags of northern wheat will buy the maid, Nebamon! Make up thy mind, and quickly. Yonder I see approaching the carrying chair of thy most dreaded rival, Menna, son of Menna. What says my lord Nebamon?"

"Five hundred *uten*, Baltu; all I have is thine for the maid!" The handsome noble shot a hasty glance in the direction of the oncoming chair of Menna, the King's Overseer. It was plainly visible to all present, as it swung up the

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 79

garden path, two outrunners with slaves going before, a foreign conceit which Menna had imported from Naharin.

Nebamon drew from his jeweled girdle his writing set. He affected to write out a memorandum.

“One thousand *uten* and five hundred bags of wheat will buy the maid, Nebamon, nothing less.”

Arriving just in time to hear the repetition of the price Menna descended from his chair, crossed the room and stood before the shrinking Bhanar. Menna never haggled. He bought outright or he signaled his bearers and was borne away without a word.

On this occasion Menna took a hasty look at Bhanar, turned to Baltu and cried: “Done, the girl is mine!”

With a scowl upon his handsome face Nebamon haughtily withdrew, followed by a half score of excited Theban nobles and the usual group of hangers on, those “flies on meat” who

customarily attached themselves to the more reckless nobles of the resident city.

Within the hour the delighted Bhanar found herself attached as maid to the person of the Princess Sesen, attendant of Noferith, the young Queen. All her fears in this direction were instantly dispelled when the Princess advised her of her simple duties in Syrian as pure as her own. From that hour Bhanar adored the very ground her beautiful mistress walked on. From that day Bhanar became the very shadow of the little Princess.

The secret of Bhanar's present good fortune was due to the fact that Menna, son of Menna, loved the Princess Sesen. Menna felt that such a gift as that of the beautiful slave-girl would go far to impress the haughty little maiden with the sincerity of his suit. Possibly this lavish expenditure would touch her hard little heart.

The price was indeed a high one, even for a Royal Overseer. But it was the first time in all Menna's thirty-odd years that a woman had not smiled upon his suit.

Bhanar Found a Home in Egypt 81

Stranger still, perhaps, for the first time, Menna truly loved a woman. True, Menna's love by now was closely akin to madness, since the little maid continually frowned upon his suit. The youthful general, Ramses, he knew, was ever in her thoughts.

Yet, Menna never despaired. In earlier years he had often been on the point of relinquishing some tirelessly pursued quarry, of a similarly serenely unruffled type, when lo, the pomegranate had suddenly fallen into his hands.

But what of Renny, Bhanar's would-be rescuer? Returning overjoyed from his visit to Yakab, the Chancellor, Renny had reached the acacia grove fronting Thethi's Tavern when something suddenly descended upon his head and the last thing he remembered was a stunning blow and then—oblivion.

Could Renny the Syrian but have had some slight premonition of what next would happen to his poor unconscious body, he would certainly have rubbed that small green crocodile pendant at his neck, the gift of an Egyptian friend, and

uttered the formula which drives that voracious creature from its prey.

But Renny was a Syrian. He wore that little green charm merely to please his friend. Renny put no trust in feathers of ibis or blood of lizard; he smiled at charms and magic incantations. Renny's own simple religion was a religion of love, not of fear.

Yet, who knows, perhaps the little charm was to assist him, and this in spite of himself.

CHAPTER VII

HOW RENNY THE SYRIAN ESCAPED THE CROCODILES

WE have already alluded to the violent sandstorm which had raged over Thebes.

As Kham-hat had truthfully said, such a storm had not been known since that memorable day when Thi the Beautiful, had been brought up-river to Egypt's capital, there to become the favorite wife of the late Pharaoh.

The storm had been especially severe in the immediate vicinity of the capital, or so at least, it had seemed to the disgusted Thebans. Their loud complaints as to the hideous damage done were not unduly emphasized, since the baleful effects of this storm, both in and about the resident city, were apparent on every hand.

Many of the famous palms and giant sycamores in Pharaoh's palace garden had been uprooted or despoiled of their finest branches. Many of the Abyssinian trees and Lebanus

cedars, that lined the causeway leading to Hatshepsut's ivory-toned chapel, now lay prone across its well-paved incline, or, loosened at the roots, hung shriveled, torn and dejected, far out across its brightly painted parapets.

Dust, a foot or more in depth, had drifted against the gates of the villas, many of which seemed as if they might rather have opened upon some gloomy mortuary-garden than upon the dainty gardens of exalted nobles, with their wealth of tamarisks, acacias, myrrh, sandalwood and stately Lebanon cedars.

Not a sign of life was visible along the sloping walls of the city, not a living thing stirred in its dark and narrow streets. Covered by the same gray pall of dust, Thebes had seemingly united herself with her immense burial-ground to the westward. Thebes appeared to have become one vast city of the dead!

A swirl of the fine impalpable Egyptian dust rose into the shimmering air, a whirling and ever-widening cone—part sand, part river-silt, part *human* ashes. Yes, throughout the Nile

Renny Escaped the Crocodiles 85

Valley, an Egyptian might be said to breathe the very ashes of his ancestors.

Suddenly the sun leaped above the Eastern Hills. The city awoke. Smoke rose upon the heavy morning air and drifted slowly, like a blue-gray streamer, up the curving shores of the Theban Valley.

Kathi, the embalmer, on his way to the landing stage leading to the Temple of Karnak, paused to watch the maneuvers of the war-vessels, as they sought their berths along the western bank.

At this moment, one vessel's huge square sail, a picturesque checker-board of green and white, flapped madly, as its head flew up suddenly in the wind. It seemed that Duādmochef, the Wind-god, was not to be cheated out of a few parting puffs from his lusty lungs!

The look-out-man, standing in the prow, pole in hand, shouted a hasty warning to the captain aft, but, before his raucous order could be understood, the heavy boat had buried its nose, with the ghastly trophies it bore, deep in a hid-

den sand-bar. For a time it seemed that the stiffly swaying forms of the wretched foreign chieftains lashed to the prow would break the thongs which held them in place. It availed nothing that Ranuf, the captain, cursed the look-out-man, his father and his forebears since Egypt emerged from the primordial *Nu*! And the unhappy Ameni suffered the irate captain's curses in silence, as it was the sixth mishap of the kind since leaving the sandstone quays of Enet, sacred to the Goddess Hathor.

As Ranuf hurled at the bent head of his look-out-man a last fearful *hekau*, a potent spell intended to consign the soul of his discomfited assistant to the voracious maw of Osiris's hound, he noticed a dark patch floating upon the water below. A white face gazed up into his:

“Abdi, quick! A drowning man; a countryman of thine; if I mistake not.”

The Syrian addressed strode quickly to the captain's side, took one look at the slowly drifting body and, casting aside his sandals and loin-cloth, disappeared headlong into the river.

Renny Escaped the Crocodiles 87

Cautiously the captain extended a long pole in the direction of the swimming sailor. In another moment, Abdi was drawn safely to the deck, and, with him, the apparently lifeless figure of the man he had attempted to save.

Abdi rose to his feet, seemingly none the worse for his adventure. He clasped the captain's hand: "Adon! I thought a devil had me by the heels! Truly the eddies hereabouts have a deadly grip! Dost know the lad? A fellow countryman by those blue eyes of his! See, they open! Breath of Adon, 'tis an ugly crack he hath! Cut the thongs that bind him! Verily, 'tis dangerous work to meddle with Syrians, as they who planned this treacherous attack will find, should Thi get wind of it! Thou knowest in such a case, even the 'tried, judged, found his bitter doom!' is omitted from the records, since 'thus we save the government's ink,' says that wag Thethi!"

The captain bent over the still motionless form of the unknown. He tried to recall the face but failed.

At this moment the Syrian presented a most

woeful appearance. The long, slim form lay inert; the eyes from time to time opened and closed wearily. Blood still trickled slowly from a slight cut along one side of his forehead.

By now he was surrounded by half a score of curious, yet sympathetic sailors. One bound up his wound, another provided him with a striped head-cloth, another placed a dry robe about his shoulders.

As he once more fluttered back to consciousness, a sailor addressed him in the Egyptian tongue:

“Stranger, how comest thou in such a strait? Verily had it not been for that patch of reeds, the crocodiles that swarm about the temple quay had sighted thy bobbing form, or the gripping whirlpools around the Southern Bend had drawn thee to the river’s slimiest depths? Breath of Sebek! Thy pendant did indeed protect thee!”

The question was understood, as was evident from the color that rushed to the pale face, and the intelligence that lit up the bright blue eyes.

Renny Escaped the Crocodiles 89

No doubt the question recalled to the Syrian's brain the memory of the attack which had so nearly cost him his life. He struggled to his feet. A draught of wine, and, in a few moments, he seemed little the worse for his experience.

"Friends, 'tis a tale of jealousy. I am named Renny, a Syrian, a sculptor attached to the house of the Lord Menna, son of Menna, Overseer of Pharaoh (health to him). I know not who hath planned this murderous attack upon me. No enemies have I to my knowledge."

He turned to Abdi: "Fellow countryman, I thank thee that thou didst't so opportunely go to my rescue. May this bar requite thee!" Renny slipped from his arm a broad band of gold and handed it to Abdi.

Whether the excitement of the rescue and rush of all hands to the side had had anything to do with it or not no one could say, but at this moment the clumsy barge suddenly yielded itself to the renewed efforts of the chanting polers, and swung around into mid-stream.

As it drew alongside the western landing-

stage, Renny leaped ashore. With a wave of the hand to his rescuers, he abruptly disappeared among the bales of hides and serried ranks of great empty water jars, which were piled up high along the shore, awaiting shipment to the north.

Renny had seen a company of Royal Guardsmen drawn up before the colonnaded portico of the royal landing-stage.

He had nothing to fear from the soldiers. These, he well knew, waited to escort the victorious General Ramses into Pharaoh's presence.

Yet, at their head, idly swinging a jeweled scarab which hung upon a long gold chain, stood Bar, a spy in the service of Menna, the King's Overseer, Renny's powerful patron.

Renny had his reasons for seeking to avoid the Prince's servant at this juncture. He could not shake off the feeling that Bar, the spy, was concerned, in some way, with the attack that had so nearly cost him his life.

CHAPTER VIII

NÖFERT-ĀRI DANCES BEFORE PHARAOH

IN chariots or carrying-chairs members of the Court were hurrying to the Palace, to assist at the feast planned to honor, at one and the same time, Belur, the newly arrived Hittite Ambassador, and the victorious Egyptian general, Ramses, but now returned from Nubia.

According to precedent Ramses would present himself before Pharaoh and the Court in order to receive the customary favors bestowed upon a victorious Egyptian leader, those "favours which the King bestows" and "the gold order of valor."

Throughout the long day the excitable Theban populace had yelled itself hoarse, as one after another the war-barges swung around the great bend of the river, south of Thebes.

Each boat was marked by its standard-of-cognizance, and no sooner was its mooring-stake

driven into the bank than a yelling, gesticulating and joyfully-weeping hoard of relatives and friends of the crew burst upon its decks.

From that moment, all signs of discipline utterly vanished. Men, women and children entered upon one of those inevitable carouses which, in Egypt, ever followed such a homecoming.

Everyone was coming up to Thebes in order to witness the great celebration in honor of victory. It being festival time even the indigent passengers at the western bank were to-day allowed to work their way across the river by bailing the leaky ferryboats.

Thi, the Queen-Mother, in company with the weak but pretty young queen, left the Women's Apartments early, on her way to the Banquet-hall. As she passed the various courts and columned porticos the watchful eunuchs, guards and servants, hurled themselves prostrate at sight of her. On knees and elbows they groveled, prayers for "health" and "long life" upon their trembling lips.

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 93

To the dreaded Thi, as to Pharaoh himself, honors were rendered as to the gods.

And she whom Egypt feared, and Enana the Magician dared; she who had been called by her friends Thi the Beautiful, by her enemies Thi the Foreigner, Thi the Commoner, how shall we best describe her?

The Queen-Mother's head was small, her low forehead slightly retreated. Her nose was of the delicate Syrian type, the tip somewhat rounded, the nostrils well opened. From beneath artificially prolonged eyebrows, eyebrows shaved close and lightly penciled with black antimony paste, glowed two large and lustrous eyes. Thi's lips were full, but well-cut. Cruelty showed in the drooping corners.

At this moment Thi was clad in one of the richest costumes of the extravagant New Empire, a pale-green robe minutely plaited and studded at intervals with lotus-flowers in beaten gold. Gold plumes, which rose above a gem-encrusted head-dress of vulture form, seemed to give height and dignity to one who was in reality a short and slender woman.

About the great Queen's throat, wrist and ankles were broad bands of alternate gold bars and minute cylinders of beryl and amethyst. The names of Aton, the Syrian sun-god, stamped in rich blue fayence, hung from a long chain well down upon her high bosom.

Though now no longer in the dazzling beauty of her youth, Thi still possessed many a charm of face and form. Yet, had she been devoid of such, her voice had served to win for her the great and powerful empire that was hers. At the sound of it, one knew at once why in Akh-min, where first her parents had settled, men had called her Nightingale; why, at a later date, poets and singers of the Theban court had vied with one another to do her honor.

No mere doll-faced beauty had caused the former monarch to set aside Queen Hanit, an exalted lady of the line of Egypt's royal house and a lineal descendant of Ra the sun-god, yes, and to cause the death of the unhappy Prince Wazmes whom she had borne him.

Thi's face and form had been enough to set kings and princes warring. Yet, to those prized

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 95

gifts of Hathor, Beauty's Goddess, had Ptah of Memphis added the voice of a ten-stringed lute, and Khnum, Fashioner of Mankind, an intellect that had quickly won to her by far the greater number of the nobles of the court.

Thus had Thi, a foreigner, a woman sprung, by descent at least, from common Syrian stock, usurped the rightful place of the great Queen Hanit, descendant of kings and a king's wife.

At the foot of a short flight of steps leading to the festival hall, Thi and Menna met. They exchanged the customary string of effusive greetings and honorifics.

As the Queen-Mother swept on she found her way blocked by the crooked form of Enana. The wizened old Magician stood leaning upon his jackal-headed staff immediately in the center of the narrow passage.

Enana's sole garment consisted of a long kilt or tunic fastened at the waist by a jeweled belt, and faced in front with squares of fine gold. This was an affectation of a fashion long since forgotten.

At Thi's cold greeting the puckered and

heavily-lined face of this animated mummy trembled with what might equally well have answered for a smile or a grimace. Yet, beneath his shaven eyebrows, his half-veiled eyes glittered ominously, as they lifted for a second to those of the frowning queen. Enana ignored her greeting.

Involuntarily Thi shuddered, yet inwardly cursed herself for a fool. It was only Enana, a fellow who lived, nay, had lived for centuries, 'twas said, upon the credulity and superstition of the Thebans!

Thi swept past him and out upon the balcony overlooking the long hall. There she found Noferith, her son's wife, the Princess Sesen, and others of the maids of honor, awaiting her.

As Thi seated herself, Menna passed below her balcony. He bowed to the two queens, yet his eyes sought those of the Princess Sesen.

Menna, the King's Overseer, had again yielded himself to the spell of a pair of lustrous eyes and dimpled cheeks. He loved the little Princess, as he had never loved before.

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 97

For the past few weeks, Menna had wooed the Princess assiduously. Thi, the Queen-Mother, for reasons of her own, had sought to aid him in his suit.

All in vain.

The little Princess would have none of him. Thi knew well, as in fact did Menna, that Sesen's heart was filled with thoughts of Ramses, with hopes of his speedy return. Menna's servant, Bar, called by many "Menna's shadow," as lean and hungry looking as a neglected *ka*, sought to convince his master that her indifference was due to a present lover, some favorite among the courtiers. Menna knew better, yet affected to believe him. Meanwhile, unused to failure in such enterprises, he continued to besiege the Princess with well-turned couplets, rich and ever-varied presents, and courtly flatteries.

At this moment, his restless black eyes sought to attract those of the all-unconscious object of his affections. His glance dwelt with delight upon her spotless white gala robes. He noted the graceful wig confined by a rose-colored fillet

from which drooped fragrant white lotus-flowers; the huge circular gold ear-rings, and the flashing pectoral ornament—a glitter of jeweled inlays—which rose and fell at every breath.

Sesen's cheeks and lips were artificially reddened, her eyebrows shaved and lightly penciled with kohl, like those of the Queen and Queen-Mother. Yet, unlike them, her tongue was silent, her smiles had vanished. Sesen's somber eyes evinced little interest in the bustle and joyful preparations about her. Twice did Noferith the Queen, touch her with the dainty little scent-tube she carried, in an effort to recall her to her laughter-loving self.

Finally, after the sweet-scented lotus which each lady carried had been changed but once, the Princess Sesen rose, pleading faintness. The sympathetic Queen whom she served, allowed her to retire without exacting the formal prostration.

At her withdrawal Menna's disappointment was intense. He sank back deep into his painted

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 99

cedar chair. For Menna the feast was at an end.

But not for the noisy revelers about him. Even the haughty members of the Hittite ambassador's suite forgot for a moment their lofty attitude of detachment.

For the corpulent Mentu, son of the Vizier Kena, had whetted the appetites of these Asiatics. Through the somewhat hesitating medium of a sibilant Canaanitic dialect, the garrulous Mentu had somehow managed to make them understand that the entire kitchen forces of the governor of Thinis and of Hotepra, Prince of On, had been brought upstream to assist the royal cooks.

"Indeed," said Mentu, "though whirling sandstorms bury us; though drought and pestilence stalk the blistered banks of Hapi, yet shall we enjoy the choicest viands, the rarest wines," he clicked his purple tongue; "wines whose seals have stood intact since good King Ahmes' time! But, wait until thou seest Nōfert-āri! Breath of Ra! Then shalt thou say:

'Baal forgive me! Our country is afar off! Between us lies the raging sea! Egypt is a land of pleasure and delight! Here let us tarry!' "

And so it proved. For marvel followed marvel with almost bewildering rapidity.

A dish that won the plaudits of all was an enormous platter of Syrian craftsmanship. Upon this gold dish, in the midst of gold reeds and papyrus, swam ducks, plover, and other aquatic birds. In a miniature skiff, a diminutive Egyptian boatman propelled his silver craft over perfumed water. An Egyptian noble, standing upright in the bow, aimed a jeweled throw-stick at a flock of egrets which, with wings outspread, quivered upon gold wires high above a thicket of feathery papyrus.

The realistic little figures were of pastry, the birds cooked with all their feathers on!

Dishes of this sort were countless in number, the design of the last more astonishing than that of the first, since each jealous cook had sought to outshine his rival, both in originality of design and richness of material.

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharaoh 101

But now, at a signal from Pennūt the Usher, Pharaoh rose from the throne and advanced to the edge of the dais. To his feet the Usher led the youthful Ramses.

And there, to the accompaniment of a deepening roar of applause from the onlookers, Pharaoh slipped about his victorious general's neck that coveted distinction of the Egyptian military, the necklace of gold lions and flies.

In a brief lull the words of Pharaoh echoed through the resplendent hall:

“Welcome, thrice welcome, Ramses! Let the praises of thy lord expand thy heart! Mei has recounted the story of thy skill and energy in the conducting of this most bitterly fought campaign. Where now are the chieftains of Nubia? They have been ground down as the seed of the date beneath the crusher, as eye-paint upon the palette. Yea, they have become as grain which the mill has crushed! Now are the chieftains of Wawat forced to sulk in the caves of the hyena. As a fly hast thou worried them, as a lion hast thou destroyed them! We place these precious

orders about thy throat. From this day thy renown is fragrant as the perfume of the Incense Country. Arise! Take thy place beside us as 'Fan-bearer-on-the-right-of-Pharaoh, thy Lord!' "

At his elevation to this coveted position, renewed applause seemed to shake the painted roof.

Friends pressed forward to kiss the jeweled chains and ornaments that had but now left the hand of the god-king. Some hurled themselves prostrate before these rewards which only Pharaohs might bestow.

The King shot a covert glance in the direction of the Balcony reserved for the royal harem. The Queen-Mother shook her jeweled *menat* in company with the other ladies. Yet, in Thi's case, the action represented far more than mere applause or acclamation.

The tactful Belur, Prince of the Hittites, in turn, rose and added a few well chosen words of praise for a difficult task so promptly and bloodlessly accomplished.

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 103

Pharaoh, watching him from beneath his richly painted canopy, doubted the sincerity of the smile that played about the handsome lips of the Hittite. Again he resolved in his mind the probable cause of the Hittite's inopportune visit.

A space was cleared in the center of the hall. The tables, still groaning under the burden of their barely glanced at dainties, disappeared as if by magic. The well-woven mats and glossy panther-skins were lifted from the stucco floor, and out upon the space so made sprang a troupe of lotus-wreathed girls, naked save for the beaded cincture of maidenhood which encircled their slender hips.

Scattering Syrian crocuses and the pure white petals of the lotus, these coffee-colored little maids, the very embodiment of childish grace, pelted one another with the perfumed shower until their little ankles were well-nigh hidden.

As if this had been a signal, the bright blue warbonnet of Pharaoh was lifted from his head; an Asiatic slave-boy bathed the royal fingers

and Pharaoh, with a nervous twitch to his long, thin features, leaned back wearily against the embroidered cushions placed at his back by the attentive Dedu.

The last scene of what had proved a veritable feast of marvels was about to commence.

The sudden entrance of the merry little children had been the prelude to "the King's dance."

This dance was a far different performance from that series of posturing and tumbling commonly provided by the acrobats of old.

And it was thought that "the King's dance" could only be performed by Nōfert-āri, claimed as daughter by the blind Tutiya, though known to the irreverent youth of Thebes as the child of Hathor, of the Goddess of Beauty, sprung from the head of Ra.

At one end of the flowery carpet left by the little children knelt three heavily-cloaked women. Behind them squatted eight shaven-headed harpers, clutching to their naked breasts the gilded frames of their ten-stringed instru-

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 105

ments. Back of these again were flute-players, players on the hand drum, players on the ivory castanets, and a group of men and women whose duty it was to mark the syncopated time by clapping their hands, agitating *menats* of jeweled beads, or shaking sistra of silver or gold.

Suddenly, like the blood-curdling cry of a savage desert-dweller, the high-pitched call of Tutiya thrilled the heated frames of the expectant onlookers.

Instantly the harpers, in a soft and minor key, commenced an air at once slow in measure, plaintive and sad, an air that sounded distant amid the confused murmur of a thousand voices, the clatter of dishes and the distant tap-tap of the butlers' hurrying sandals.

The shrill cry of Tutiya had brought two of the three women to their feet. Dropping the cloaks that had enveloped them, they took their places at some distance in front of the third figure.

Turning toward the royal dais the two dancers sank down in a slowly executed cour-

tesy, until the nodding lotus-flowers that wreathed their curling wigs swept the flower-strewn floor below him.

Then, in answer to Pharaoh's scarcely perceptible acknowledgment, slowly they rose upon their slender feet and, with a "life and health, lords" placed themselves once more beside the still motionless central figure.

All eyes were centered upon this well-cloaked figure. It, too, now rose.

Was it motionless? It called to mind the birth of some glorious butterfly or moth. The undulating movement that one sees in the soon to be discarded shell best described the bursting of Nōfert-āri upon the delighted vision of her audience as, shivering with the peculiar motion seen but in those creatures of a day, she suddenly dropped the dull-brown cloak that enveloped her, and appeared fresh and smiling to their view.

In the dancer Nōfert-āri we see a slim, though willowy form, a form and countenance that represented the very arch-type of all that an Egyp-

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 107

tian held beautiful in women. A pair of sparkling eyes, elongated, obliquely set, gleamed in frames of blue-black antimony, which served to accentuate the striking whiteness in which swam their fathomless pupils.

On Nōfert-āri's head was set a dark brown wig which, covered thickly as it was with a myriad little knots and curls, dropped in well-regulated layers until it grazed the tips of her thin and high-set shoulders. This dainty perruque, fringing with its line of dancing curls a forehead that rivaled polished jasper, and touching as it did at every move and gesture the outer pencilings of her shaven and thickly kohl-stained eyebrows, seemed to soften the rather prominent cheekbones and perhaps too pointed chin. The quiver of her wide though delicate nostrils, bespoke a passionate nature, which the faintest of dimples and the ivory flash of small though regular teeth, did their best to contradict. The dancer's full round throat, her arms, wrists, and well-formed bust, were ablaze with jewels, amid which pale green beryl, dew-like

crystal, rose carnelian, gold, electrum and silver, gleamed in opulent splendor, as her bosom rose and fell.

As she stood, a pale blue lotus drooping above each hidden ear, a jeweled *menat* in one hand, her coffee-colored and well oiled skin agleam with the reflected light of innumerable prismatic colors, she seemed less an animated human form than a figure carved, by Ptah the god of sculptors himself, from a block of glowing opal.

With her first perceptible motions the music rose to the major key. The time-beaters accentuated the broken rhythm more and more, while Tutiya, her heavy though sightless eyes glowing in their painted depths—she too had once been hailed a Theban favorite—burst ever and anon into the “Nubian cry,” that blood-stirring cry which acted as an incentive to her now posturing daughter.

In the center of the flowery carpet stood Nōfert-āri, languidly shaking her jeweled *menat*. Slowly she turned upon herself, the muscles of

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 109

her lithe little body seeming to quiver in measure with the vibrant thrumming of the many stringed harps.

When again she faced the Egyptian monarch's dais, unlike the impassive gaze of Pharaoh, her features seemed to have become transformed. The "King's dance," into which she now threw all her fascination, all her mesmeric charm and unrivaled ability, portrayed by movement of the body and gesture alone the meeting and stolen tryst of a pair of lovers.

At first she affected the love-smitten beauty, a coy beauty, mindful of her many charms.

Suddenly with a start, a pigeon-like coo of delight, she appeared to throw herself into her lover's arms.

Again, with all the abandon of an artless coquetry, she stretched out her long arms and supple fingered hands as if to push him from her.

Finally, with one or two graceful little steps, accompanied by an arch glance over her

shoulder, Nōfert-āri advanced to the very edge of the royal dais and commenced that portion of the dance for which she was so famed.

Into this every muscle of her supple body was forced to move in unison or singly as she willed. Her lustrous eyes gleamed beneath their darkened eyebrows, her expanded nostrils quivered, her full vermilioned lips were parted, the very veins in her forehead throbbed in measure with the refrain. As her supple arms, wrists, and hands played about her body with a wavelike—an indescribable motion—her jeweled bust and firm, yet flexible hips, swayed to the spasmodic movements natural to the dance.

The music ever increased in volume and, as if to add contrast to the grace and beauty of the peerless dancer, a hideous naked pigmy, beating a tiny onoga-skin drum, leaped out upon the floor beside her, and grotesquely imitated her every move and gesture.

Thus, to a chorus of wild staccato yells from Tutiya and the excited time-beaters, Nōfert-āri, her form seeming to undulate in fierce spas-

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharaoh III

modic waves from breast to hip, with arms thrown high above her head, fingers clenched and eyes fast closed, sank slowly to the stucco floor.

Presently, as she rose, still trembling, and while the echoes of that clamorous applause still reverberated amid the flaring lotus-capitals, a royal usher hurried to her side, and in the name of Pharaoh, presented her with a blue fayence goblet of lotiform design. Inlaid in green, white and red about the foot was an inscription revealing her euphonious and happily-chosen name, Nōfert-āri, "She who is made of beauty."

Following the dance, Pharaoh had retired within himself. He had assumed an air of studied abstraction and aloofness.

Yet, Dedu remarked signs of nervousness in the twitching of the jaw. Dedu had been born in the palace, in the self-same year as his exalted master. Dedu might well have been called, as indeed at times he was, his master's "double," his other self.

In Pharaoh's slightly twitching hands and in

the covert glances which from time to time he directed toward the haughty leader of the Hittites, Dedu spelled expectancy and, withal, a nameless fear.

Then it was the Hittite, not Enana the Magician, his royal master feared! Dedu knew there had been much speculation as to the true meaning of Belur's sudden and quite unexpected visit to the Egyptian capital.

So far, oriental courtesy—coupled with the Egyptian's inherent regard for the rights of hospitality—had forbidden any outward evidences of impatience on the part of Pharaoh or his august Mother.

And Pharaoh did well to distrust the wily Hittite. With the pause that had followed the withdrawal of Nōfert-āri and her assistants, the Asiatic prince rose to his feet, slowly lifting his jeweled hand to command attention. His keen glance swept the heads of the swaying crowd which craned its neck the better to see him and to hear his words.

The Prince of Charchemish bowed to Pha-

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 113

raoh. Slowly he arranged the sash which served to hold in place his fringed robes and the little ivory-handled dagger which rested in its folds.

Silence fell upon the noisy revelers, an ominous silence. It seemed as if Pharaoh's nervousness had somehow mysteriously communicated itself to the various groups of Egyptian nobles gathered about him.

Belur the Hittite began to speak. He dwelt at length upon the many occasions during which Egyptian ships had brought grain and other food to famine-stricken Asia. He thanked Great Pharaoh for his present hospitality and the courteous consideration which had been shown him since first he landed upon the fertile soil of Egypt. He dwelt upon the power for good exerted by Egypt, not only in Asia, but among the savage tribes of Nubia, as witness the victorious campaign just brought to a close, and which they were at that moment celebrating.

Knowing the might of Pharaoh, lord of Egypt, Rimur, King of Charchemish, his

brother, had sent him down into Egypt, that he might effect an alliance with the throne of Egypt, an alliance which he was sure would eventually prove of mutual benefit to Thebes and Charchemish alike.

In token of his fraternal esteem Rimur had sent to Egypt a full shipload of the treasure of his country and of the countries adjacent thereto. Its hold was filled with the gold and silver vessels of Zahi, with swords and daggers cunningly damascened with gold, the work of Megiddan craftsmen. Inlaid corselets were there, jeweled quivers, gauntlets worked with gold and silver threads, and shawls for the ladies of the courts, so finely woven that they might be passed with ease through Pharaoh's golden signet-ring. To the Queen, the Hittite King had sent a covered carrying-chair, of stamped leather richly gilded; to the august Queen-Mother, a golden goblet from the hands of Ilg of Kadesh; and lastly, to Pharaoh, his kingly brother, three fully equipped chariots, together with nine Syrian horses, swifter than

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharoah 115

the north-wind, to draw them! In the name of King Rimur, his brother, he asked for the hand of the eldest daughter of Pharaoh his brother, the Princess Aten-merit, in marriage!

During this speech Pharaoh's nervous fears had gradually given place to astonishment and finally to anger. This new-found arrogance and assurance among the "little people" was an entirely new departure.

As he rose to his feet to reply there was a look upon his face which neither Belur nor his own courtiers had expected to see. Before that look even Belur's assumed effrontery slowly dissolved.

"Son of Rabatta, it is now less than a year since a Hittite embassy stood within this very hall! Like thee, it came freighted with the rarest and richest products of the Asiatics! If we remember rightly its offerings included one hundred logs of Lebanon cedar, five hundred pounds of Cilician silver, three hundred pounds of the true lapis-lazuli of Babylon, two hundred gold and electrum goblets, with choice

silver vases of the workmanship of Zahi! In comparison with this, thy meager offerings seem to prove that Charchemish hath lost its hold upon the Lebanus, upon the Cilician mines, upon the princes of Zahi, of Kadesh and Megiddo? Or perhaps thy brother hath forgotten the circumstances which prompted his father's princely gift? Not with gifts for favors to be received came Rabatta thy father! Nay, with *tribute*, with the tribute of a *vassal* did he come! With tribute exacted through fear of Egypt's might.

"Take back this message to Rimur thy brother! Thus saith Pharaoh of Egypt: ' 'Tis but a breath of time since Rabatta knelt at Pharaoh's knee, swearing fealty! Wherefore hath Rimur, his son, failed to do the like?'

"As to thy insolent proposal, when hath a Daughter of the Sun left the land of Egypt at the beck and call of rebel princelings? 'Tis in our mind to hold thee hostage for thy brother's quick return to reason. Yet, go! And with

Nōfert-āri Dances Before Pharaoh 117

thee take thy gifts, fit only to dazzle some savage Amu!"

At Pharaoh's words Belur the Hittite took a step nearer to the royal dais. A covert sneer played about his well-cut lips, though his eyes were hard, his cheek pale. Raising his hand with a gesture almost threatening once again he addressed the trembling monarch:

"Hear me, Pharaoh! One other word my august brother sends to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The Hittite army is to-day one hundred thousand strong. The princes of Zahi and Naharin, the kings of Kadesh, Gezer and Megiddo, have joined their forces unto his! Of thy Syrian vassals half have left thee! The Khabiri are up! Ribaddi alone stands true to thee and, even he by now doubtless has fed a vulture's maw.

"Hearken to the words of Rimur, my brother! Thy present state is well known to us! Thy plague-stricken land stands on the brink of a great religious war! In Nubia to the south, as

in thy Asiatic possessions to the north, thy vassal-states have risen in revolt against thee! Nay, Pharaoh, heed the words of Rimur my brother, or thy Asiatic possessions are lost to thee! Great Kheta, the combined armies of all the Asiatic principalities, stand at thy very gates ready to devour thee! Thus saith Rimur, Lord of lords, King of kings, Lion that Devoureth Lions!"

Pharaoh's face was terrible to see. His jaws worked, the veins upon his forehead stood out like knotted ropes, his large eyes flashed with fires of wrath. He quickly raised his golden scepter as if he would have felled the audacious Hittite at his feet. The wand of sard and gold snapped between his clenched fingers.

Controlling himself by a mighty effort Pharaoh pointed to the door and somehow managed to articulate the one word: "Begone!"

CHAPTER IX

THE LUMINOUS BOOK

HIGH up among the tombs lived Unis, neophyte of the Temple of Amen. The abandoned tomb-chapel which served to shelter him, immediately overlooked the tree-embowered villa of Enana the Magician, for whom, at times, the youthful prophet worked. His only attendant was Bata, an aged Ethiopian, not so long ago his nurse.

Bata was seen almost daily in the market-place. Here she not only collected the various offerings of the simple herdsmen and peasants, but acted as go-between in the affairs of the superstitious farmers, herdsmen and petty officials who were in the habit of consulting her master. For Unis carried on a desultory practice in necromancy, astrology and divination. Bata collected the fees, which were generally paid in kind.

Unis spent the few "auspicious days" which the Egyptian calendar allowed to each month, seated upon a low bench beneath a sycamore tree on the border of a narrow canal, immediately opposite Enana's island home. Here he listened to those who came to consult him or wrote letters for those who required it.

In his character of seer, Unis had found it necessary to act in many varied capacities. During the course of a single day, he was often called upon to act as scribe, physician, exorcist, diviner, faith-healer and farmer.

Unis was supposed to know the past; he could foretell the future. He could "see" one who had tampered with his neighbor's landmarks or altered the flow of water in his neighbor's dykes. He could forewarn of an approaching sand-storm—that nine days' terror of the traveler. He could provide the necessary amulets against the bite of snake or scorpion. He could tell the whereabouts of lost cattle or name that man or woman who had made off with the offerings to the dead.

Thus, a timid maiden, desirous of a love-

charm, was advised to drink the ashes of a lizard dissolved in water and to swallow it, with a prayer to Hathor, some auspicious evening when Aah, the silver moon, shone at her brightest.

Consulted by some young gallant of the city, on similar, though less wholesome lines, Unis would draw a circle in the sand. A circle, a gold bangle! Money can open many a door!

The circle might be readily understood, but the outline of the jackal above it—death's emblem, spiritual and physical—was generally beyond the young man's powers of comprehension.

To the aged Teta, desirous of a potion which would assure to him the wished for one hundred and ten years, Unis replied: "I see the *ba*-bird poised above thy tomb." Teta was found dead upon his couch the following morning.

To Benta the ambitious Unis had taught the value of patience by pointing to Auta hard at work upon his granite statue of the Princess Bekit-aton.

Six months of cutting, chiseling, rubbing and

burnishing had the persevering Auta lavished upon his masterpiece, and, throughout those weary months, but three simple implements had served him for his difficult task—a wooden mallet, a bronze chisel and a flint burnisher. Apart from this, sand, water and emery-dust were Auta's only helpers.

Though Unis was consulted by peasant and petty official, peasant and official alike considered him mad. As such he became a person to be pitied and cared for, as one afflicted by the gods, yet one through whom the gods spoke. Thus, Unis could come and go wheresoever and whensoever he pleased.

Except for his periodic visits to the sycamore, Unis was rarely seen. All his time was spent in the great temple library or amidst the crumbling shrines and half-choked tombs of the necropolis.

To the guards of the cemetery he was someone's animated *ka*, a restless 'soul' seeking, perhaps, to identify his ruined tomb or to find and become reunited to the lost 'souls' of his wife and children. He was constantly on the lips

of the public-storytellers as an ever-present example of the truth of one of the oldest and most familiar of Egyptian wondertales, the Adventures of Menti.

In point of fact, Unis was as much flesh and blood as anyone. Yet none, whether courtier, priest or peasant, could have guessed the reason of his tireless researches among the open shafts and ruined chapels of the older part of the great Theban cemetery.

However, the very fact that the Thebans were so frequently regaled with the story of Menti might well have given them a clue as to the true reason of Unis' occupation in that haunted spot.

It seems that Menti's "spirit" returned from enjoying a few hours among living men and re-entered his mummy to find that the bodies of his wife and child were missing from their coffins. Menti at once compelled their restoration by means of his knowledge of the names, charms and talismans contained in the magic Book of Thoth.

Written, 'twas said, by the God Thoth himself, this wonder-working Book had once be-

longed to that Architect and Seer of old, Imhotep. It was a common saying in Unis' day that the Great Step Pyramid west of white-walled Memphis, could never have been raised had it not been for the compelling incantations—recited in the prescribed attitude and with the proper tone of voice—by that now deified architect of the godkings of old, Imhotep.

Before the death of Imhotep, it was said that he had hidden the Magic Book behind the sarcophagus in which lay King Zozer, his master, deep within his stupendous pyramid. A thousand years later its hiding place had been revealed to Amenhotep, son of Hap, in a dream.

Amenhotep's possession of the Book must have been a fact. How else could he have erected the colossal Temple to the "spirit" of the late Pharaoh; how otherwise could he have built the Temple at Kha-en-Mat, the beautiful Temple on the Island and the great colonnaded Temple of Amen, upon which, at the command of Pharaoh Akhten-aton, work had but recently been relinquished.

Indeed, without Thoth to assist him, who could have raised the two great statues of the late Pharaoh, over seven hundred tons in weight. Who could have lifted above the court the stupendous architraves of his Mortuary Temple, two hundred tons of stone, and, finally, who could have perfected the huge stone tablet, thirty feet in height, and covered it with gold and gems? None but the God Thoth, of course!

But, would Thoth willingly stop the Sunboat and descend to earth merely to raise for men monuments that should rival the very halls of the gods themselves?

Not unless compelled thereto by the fact that his *Names* were known to mortals, his stolen *Talismans* in the possession of some inhabitant of earth.

One object alone on earth contained those Hidden Names and Talismans, together with the "Utterances" which could compel both Thoth and Set to leave their appointed places in the sky and descend to earth.

This series of irresistible "incantations,"

these compelling "utterances" which could thus drag the very gods from heaven, were all contained in the "Luminous Book of Thoth."

Herein were inscribed the Hidden Names of all the Gods, the Triads, the Enneads of the Sky. Herein were the Mysterious Names of the Keepers of the Double Gates of Heaven; of the Serpents that guard the approaches of Duat, of Ra in his Boat, of Osiris on his Throne!

So awe-inspiring a hold upon the imagination of the Thebans had the legend of this mysterious Book that its name was never mentioned. Rarely, indeed, was it alluded to by the priests.

Like that of Pharaoh, the sun-god manifest in the flesh, like that of the Unseen Statue of the Great Temple of Amen, like that of the abhorred Crocodile God of Ombos, its name was never taken upon the lips.

When the architect Amenhotep, son of Hap, was gathered to his fathers, Pharaoh commanded that he should be buried beneath a

little temple which stood somewhat to the south of his own stupendous mortuary temple.

Here, for a time, Unis had acted as lector, intoning the prayers and offering to the hidden *ka*-statue of the dead architect the various portions of meat, bread and wine with which Pharaoh had endowed the tomb, out of taxes received from the nearby town of Onit. In so doing, Unis stood immediately above the subterranean chamber in which the mummy of Amenhotep lay.

Unis had been called from his duties at the son of Hap's tomb by Enana, and set to work among the ancient manuscripts of the great library of Amen.

Enana would have him find some clue to the present whereabouts of the Book of Thoth. As he loved life and feared death he was told to keep for his master's ears alone any news to this effect.

Unis soon became an initiate of the Sorcerers of Amen, then minor prophet of Amen. With

such a powerful master as Enana, First Magician of the Temple, Unis felt that he should go far. He gave himself up wholly to the work in hand. Certain hints gleaned from the documents led him to believe that the Book had, as of old, been secreted in a tomb, in this case an unnamed tomb on the western shore.

Unis took up his residence in one of the abandoned tombs. With unremitting assiduity and stoical fortitude he spent day after day among the excoriated boulders, the dusty mounds, the bat-infested shafts and tumbled-in shrines which constituted the older corner of the Theban necropolis.

In this fruitless search the Gods Hunger and Thirst were his only companions.

Unis turned once more to the library. With indomitable patience he continued his researches among its unending shelves of musty documents.

Soon he noticed that the name of Amenhotep, the son of Hap, was very frequently coupled with that of the lost Book. In fact, Unis finally

convinced himself that the Book lay buried with the body of that old sage, in the subterranean vault of the little temple at which he had formerly served.

Armed with permission to spend a night in the temple, Unis waited until Ahmes, the present *ka*-priest, had retired into the outer forecourt, in an alcove of which he slept. When the aged priest had snuffed out his lamp, Unis descended into the vault immediately beneath the offering-tablet and altar.

With determined perseverance, Unis tapped walls and floor, slowly, systematically. In the western corner of the floor his work met with success. The pavement thereabouts emitted a hollow sound. In a few moments Unis had lifted a square slab which fitted so nicely to the floor that the joints had been invisible. Lamp in hand, Unis descended a short flight of steps, picked his way along an uneven rocky passage, and presently stood in the vaulted tomb-chamber of the son of Hap.

For an instant unreasoning fear clutched at

the heart of the reckless priest. There stood the alabaster sarcophagus which held the body of the sage. Unis read the inscription engraved upon the side: "Amenhotep, born of Yatu; his father Hap, son of Hap, Justified of Osiris." There lay Amenhotep and, with him, the Book.

The Book! Unis' fears vanished. Trembling with excitement and high hopes the young priest set himself to his self-imposed task. It was an auspicious night in the calendar of the prophets of Amen! The Star of Thoth was in the ascendent!

Unis set to work with a short, stout bronze bar. Hour after hour went by unnoted by the feverishly excited youth.

At last the stone cover yielded to his efforts. Unis' eyes gleamed with joy and anticipation. Enana, his master, would be hailed as one with Imhotep, builder of the pyramids, with Ptah-hotep the Philosopher, with Amenhotep, son of Hap, himself! Perhaps he too would compel the gods to do his bidding!

Unis gave a last push to the great cover. It fell to the sand-covered floor with a dull thud.

He lowered the lamp. There before him was the outer coffin of the old sage. This, in turn, Unis lifted and found, beneath, the gem-crusted coffin—solid gold it seemed—in which Amenhotep's royal master had caused the son of Hap to be placed.

The heat in the little chamber was intense. The blood in Unis' temples throbbed with his exertions. His body gleamed in the flickering light; perspiration ran from every pore. For a time the youth returned to the upper chamber where he could fill his lungs with the purer and cooler air.

But not for long. In a few moments he returned to the tomb chamber. He lifted the gorgeous coffin-lid from the linen-swathed form it concealed. At once the stifling odor of myrrh, liquidambar, cinnamon, and other strong essences again almost overcame him.

Unis bent down. With an effort he lifted the mummified figure. He felt about underneath the head. Nothing! Unis tried the feet of the tightly-draped figure. No book!

Then Unis did something for which he knew

punishment on earth was severe. What might be his fate in the hereafter Unis did not dare to think! Lifting the body from the coffin altogether, he commenced slowly and methodically to unwrap it. Yard upon yard of aromatic linens he loosened, until finally nothing but the blackened form of Amenhotep lay before him.

No eyes had Unis for the jewels with which Amenhotep's sorrowing master had covered the dead architect. The throbbing brain of Unis was concentrated upon but one thing, the Magic Book.

It was not in the wrappings. It was not between the knees of the deceased, where, as Unis knew, so often documents are placed. It was not between the folded hands of Amenhotep. It was neither at his head nor at his feet.

Unis replaced the body in its coffin, throwing the linens in upon it pellmell. He covered it with its two wooden covers. The great stone outer cover he knew must stay where it had fallen. He could have that replaced by others, following his report on the present condition of

the extra wrappings of the son of Hap, which had been his ostensible reason for entering the tomb.

Unis once again took mallet in hand. He carefully and methodically examined both walls and floor.

He dared not rap upon the False Door. Behind it slept Amenhotep's living self, as represented by his statue.

Unis had far more terror of that enchanted wooden portrait of the dead man than he had of the body; the shell, of Amenhotep itself.

Alas, all his efforts were in vain. The Book of Books was not in the tomb.

Bitterly disappointed, Unis stooped to pick up his flickering lamp. As he did so his eyes fell upon a gleaming object which was almost hidden in the sand at his feet. Mechanically he picked it up and glanced at the blue and green inlays. The *tat*-emblem and solar-disc upon its gold base showed it to be the scarab-ring of Amenhotep, son of Hap.

From that date, Unis spent all the daylight

hours among the tombs of the Theban cemetery. He systematically covered every foot of the hillside, entering both the ancient tombs, and the modern, as far as he was allowed. At night he delved among the ancient scrolls of the library of Amen.

Each night upon his return he had been met by the impatient Enana. Every night, week in, week out, he had perforce to shake his head, to spread his scratched and often bleeding hands deprecatingly.

Of late Unis' step had lost its elasticity. An unnatural brightness glistened in his sunken eyes. To-night, especially, Enana's mind had been filled with anxiety for his safety.

Unis should have rounded the point by the tamarisk grove hours ago. Enana's anxiety was not for Unis. His one thought was of the Book. The Book he must have, if he would put his present plans into effect.

Had the young priest but known it, he was the third person sacrificed by Enana, the Magician, to the finding of the Book.

As Enana turned to enter the low doorway

of the tomb in which Unis had recently taken up his quarters, an unusual light in the valley below caught his attention. He paused. At the foot of the steep incline, at the upper reaches of which he stood, moved an unnatural pinkish flame. It seemed to palpitate, to wax and wane as it moved, for move it did.

Nearer, ever nearer, it came, constantly growing larger and brighter, until suddenly by its light Enana recognized the pallid face of Unis, his assistant.

As Unis came towards him the overjoyed Enana noticed that his long thin arms were held straight out before him, that there, upon his upturned palms lay—the Luminous Book!

It needed no word of Unis to tell him what it was. The light that glowed about its pure white leather cover proved it the Book of Books.

The overjoyed Magician advanced toward the young priest, but suddenly halted, as he caught the horrible expression which distorted the latter's livid face. It was as if Unis was being compelled against his will to hold the Book.

Unis' eyes were open, but they did not seem

to see. His feet carried him along, whither he seemed not to care. Foam flecked his blackened lips; beads of perspiration stood out upon his forehead.

Gazing straight before him, slowly Unis advanced. Hesitating for a bare second at the threshold of the doorway—one might have supposed that he was unfamiliar with it—he slowly entered the chamber, set the Book carefully down upon a cedar table near the upper wall, turned and left as silently as he had entered.

The room, which had formerly been in total darkness, was now illumined as though by a temple lamp. For a moment Unis paused, turned his unseeing eyes full upon his master, the next he had vanished behind a great stone stela which stood beside the ancient tomb which had been his dwelling place.

Far better it had been for Unis had he continued to fear the pursuing fury of the *ka*-statue of the son of Hap!

Alas for Unis! Searching one day through

the manuscripts of the library of Hotephra, Great High Priest of Amen, he had stumbled upon the son of Hap's will. It lay folded in the High Priest's copy of the temple ritual. The secret hiding-place of the Book was thus revealed to him.

CHAPTER X

PHARAOH SEEKS TO EXALT A FOREIGN GOD

PHARAOH stirred.

At once two ebony black Nubians recommenced to wave their ostrich-feather fans above his restless head.

Again did Shamash, an Asiatic eunuch, hold to his master's nose a small glass phial of somnific poppy-oil.

Once again did Bekit, his little daughter, chafe with fragrant sandal oil his fleshless ankles.

All in vain! Pharaoh's frame failed to relax.

Suddenly, with an impatient gesture, Pharaoh pushed aside the ivory head-rest and summoned Dedu, Keeper of the Royal Linen.

The rebuffed, but smiling Bekit, held to her father's lips a blue glazed goblet filled to its lotiform brim with sparkling Thinite wine. As he drank, the swaying forms of Ata and Mai,

Pharaoh Exalts a Foreign God 139

youngest of the court dancers, rose from the floor beyond him. Barely had they assumed a single graceful posture before the gold seal-ring upon Pharaoh's hand flashed in the semi-gloom. He waved them impatiently aside.

Entering softly, Dedu, Keeper of the Royal Linen, carefully drew back the curtains from the windows. These green byssus draperies had served to keep out the brilliant rays of the sun, as reflected from Queen Thi's "pleasure lake," on the northern shore of which Perao, the royal palace, stood.

Thus, one might admire the charming decoration of the room, with its green tiled walls, its cedar columns, its elaborately designed ceiling, and its painted stucco floor covered with powdered lazuli and gold dust.

In answer to a hasty motion on the part of his silent master, Dedu commenced to bind him in the long, flaring-skirted gala robes of the day, things of wonder for the seemingly innumerable ramifications of their softly rippling white pleats. A gem-encrusted belt of ruddy

Nubian gold was clasped about his slender waist, a girdle broad in the back and tapering towards the front, where a fiercely charging oryx, carved from a solid block of Babylonian lazuli, served to conceal the mechanism of the clasp. The restless monarch's feet were bound in soft gazelle-hide sandals, sandals dyed a rich rose-pink, gilded and turned up at the toe. Over a padded linen skull-cap was set the royal warbonnet, a magnificent dome-shaped headdress of a brilliant sky blue. From the center of this regal head-covering, and immediately above the monarch's low and unnaturally retreating forehead, the red jasper eyes of two golden asps glittered like spots of hidden fire, as they quivered upon flexible wires with every movement of the impatient monarch.

In public, the vain and indolent monarchs who had followed Thothmes, Conqueror of Asia, had ever affected the Warbonnet above all other headdresses. At sight of its bright blue inlays the discreet and sycophantic courtiers invariably burst into vociferous applause; the sol-

Pharaoh Exalts a Foreign God 141

diers, with howls of delight, broke into stirring war-dances. With the people at large it was hailed with delight. To them it symbolized Imperial Egypt, an Egypt to which tribute arrived from Nubia to the "great bend" of the distant Euphrates. Thus, policy had dictated the Linen Keeper's choice, for the fiction of Pharaoh as world-conqueror *must* be maintained.

Deftly the fawning Dedu encircled Pharaoh's emaciated arms and wrists with jeweled bands, his hollow chest with the *wesekh*, a broad, flat band of jewels composed of alternate strands of vari-colored stones. The tender green of Nubian emerald, the soft rose of native carnelian, the violet or rich purple of Asiatic amethyst and the several red tones of translucent sard and banded agate, were intensified as much by Pharaoh's swarthy countenance as by the pure white linen tunic over which they were spread.

Finally, the scepter of gold, banded with deep red sardonyx, was placed in Pharaoh's nervously twitching hand, and Akhten-aton, "Ter-

ror of Asia," shuffled to the door, where his ivory carrying-chair, his sixteen priestly bearers, his sun-shade and fan-bearers, and his pet lion, awaited him.

With the inevitable prayer for "health and long life" upon their lips, one and all saluted the god-king by raising their right hands and crooking their lean backs in the obsequious Syrian mode, but recently introduced.

In the columned forecourt of the Great Hall, the stentorian voice of the Court Herald warned of Pharaoh's approach and Akhtenaton, Son of the Sun-god, Lord of the Two Lands, Ruler of Rulers, Bull that Goreth Bulls, gave the looked-for signal that should start the forward movement of that great procession which would usher him into the Double Audience Hall with all the dignity of a ruler, whose sway, nominally at least, extended from the further confines of Nubia to the Great River of Mitanni.

Soon, no one but Wozer, Keeper of the Gates, his spear-men and the cooks and butlers, re-

Pharaoh Exalts a Foreign God 143

mained within the palace walls. It was with a sigh of satisfaction that Wozer heard the ever-receding tones of the chanting prophets and priestesses of the temple who headed the procession.

As Ptah the Cellarer rolled heavily by, Wozer made a gesture expressive at once of thirst and a good game. Thereafter, Ptah and he forgot, for a time, that there was a gate to watch or fragrant jars of wine to seal. Skull-cap to headcloth, both lost themselves in a high-staked game of draughts!

The Great Double Hall to which Pharaoh had been conducted consisted of a long, high nave. On either side this gigantic lotus-columned nave stood smaller aisles. Both nave and aisles were bathed in the subdued light which filtered through pierced alabaster gratings.

The dimly seen roof was composed of huge flat slabs of sandstone painted blue, and dotted with myriads of little gold stars. The bulging shafts of the columns which supported it—gigantic pillars covered from capital to base

with brilliantly colored representations of Egypt's host of deities—glowed in the shimmering light with a thousand prismatic colors. The floor was of beaten gold, its high walls a glitter of yellow tiles inlaid with varicolored paste hieroglyphs. These seemingly unending lines of inscription extolled the late Pharaoh for gifts which he had given, perforce, to the temples, or lauded him for certain imaginary deeds of prowess performed in unknown campaigns in Nubia and Asia.

At the upper end of the hall, raised upon a low dais, stood the throne of Egypt, the "golden throne of Horus." As was fitting, its curved arms were supported by the bent backs of pinioned Nubians and Asiatics.

To the right, and immediately overlooking the royal dais, was a balcony reserved for Noferith, the Queen; for Thi, the all-powerful Queen-Mother, and for a few favored ladies of their suites. This balcony, at the moment, was hung with rich embroideries.

In front of Pharaoh's throne stood painted

cedar vase-stands, from whose blue-glazed jars drooped sprays of feathery acacia, sweet-scented mimosa and nodding papyrus. To the left, high upon a lotus-festooned stand, stood a huge oryx-handled bowl of solid gold, part of the Asiatic spoil of Pharaoh's warlike ancestor Thothmes, the conqueror of Asia. From its fitfully glowing interior rose a thin blue line of aromatic incense, which broke and spread in gray, semi-transparent rings as it touched the gold stars which dimly flashed amidst the deep blue of its lofty ceiling.

The herald's announcement of the approach of Pharaoh stopped for a moment the sibilant whispers of the ladies, as the court nobles, a line of white-robed figures, ranged themselves about the dais in order of precedence. Soon after, to the acclaiming shouts of the multitude, Akhten-aton, himself, appeared. Assisted by Shamash and the ever-attentive Dedu, Pharaoh slowly seated himself upon the throne of his ancestors.

Following a motion from his long thin hand,

an usher threw wide the cedar doors at the end of the hall and, standing upon its granite threshold, cried to the vast concourse of restless figures now visible in the court:

“Long live Pharaoh, our Lord!

“Millions of millions of years to him, even so long as the sun endureth!”

With a roar the accustomed royal salutation was taken up:

“Life, health, abundance and fullness of joy be to Pharaoh, our Lord, forever and forever!”

The crowd of petty nobles, counts, monarchs and captains now pressed forward. With heads bent, spines arched, right hands raised, slowly and reverently they ranged themselves about the lower end of the hall. Were it possible, the forms of these white-robed newcomers flashed with the glitter of well-nigh as many jewels and gold or silver orders as did those of the more exalted nobles gathered about Pharaoh's throne.

Those who were unable, for lack of space, to gain access to the hall, had perforce, to stand

Pharaoh Exalts a Foreign God 147

outside in the unprotected court and exposed to the blinding shafts of the vaulting sun. Yet, few complained, so momentous was the step now contemplated by the fanatical young Pharaoh.

Anticipation and, it may well have been fear of the result, explained the unusual sternness of expression visible upon the faces of all present, a tension seldom seen upon the faces of this pleasure-loving people.

For weeks past the Theban capital, nay, Egypt itself, had been a seething maelstrom of riotous priests, mutinous soldiery, and pitiously clamorous slaves and petty farmers.

With the speed of a hungry jackal the news had spread that Pharaoh had at last determined upon the final break with the priests of Amen in Karnak.

Pharaoh's keen interest in the Syrian cult of Thi, his mother, was well known. The new Sun cult already had a certain following, at least among the nobles of the court. At this very moment many members of the nobility had

recently bound themselves to support their royal master in the revolutionary step he now contemplated.

It is true that the more exalted members of Pharaoh's court still continued their visits to the great temple of Amen in Karnak. But the nasal intonation of Ameni, the ibis-nosed lector, had of late merely served to amuse them. As to Pharaoh, himself, the over-powering reek of incense, flowers, fresh-baked bread, and blood, did but sicken him. The glitter in the silver eyes of a host of granite statues, ancestors of his, *ka*-figures of a long line of loyal and devout followers of Amen, both unnerved and repelled him.

From his golden throne Pharaoh's prominent eyes swept the oil-coned heads of his subjects. One and all were dressed, be-jeweled and anointed as for a gala day. Their loyal shouts of welcome had warmed his heart. At the same time, their enthusiasm seemed to give him the necessary strength for his momentous task.

No sooner was he seated, and the jeweled scepter placed upon a stand at his side, than the

Pharaoh Exalts a Foreign God 149

nobles on his right, ever the most exalted, pressed about him. Some prostrated themselves before him; some kissed the pointed tip of his gilded sandal, while others, in this case the aged members of his court or blood relations, embraced the pleated skirt that tightly bound his knees.

Suddenly Pharaoh signaled that he would hear no more, and immediately, with a wave of his scepter, rose to his feet.

At once, as if by magic, whisperings ceased. No one so much as breathed. Such a hush fell upon that crowded hall that one could hear without the shrill cries of the quarrelsome hawks, that flew in circles back and forth from the eaves of the roof.

As one, that vast audience sank to its knees. As one, it broke into the stirring shout of welcome:

“Hail, Life-giver! Hail, Electrum of Kings! Hail, Thou who art the very breath of our nostrils! Life, health and peace be thine, so long as Ra endures!”

Then again the same expectant hush fell upon that shimmering hall. Pharaoh raised his hand. His soft, but resonant voice filled the long hall:

“My children! We have summoned you before us that you may hear the words of Pharaoh, which change not! For centuries past hath Egypt been a jest in the mouths of strangers who cried:

“These be the sons of the Egyptians that have raised to themselves more gods than they have days in which to worship them.’ Had we not been hindered by the priests of Amen yonder, long ago, yea, even in our fathers’ time, this reproach had been removed from amongst us! Henceforth, my children, cease to cry upon the Triads; upon Amen, Mut, and Khonsu; upon Horus, Set and Ausar!

“As you all know, the gods of Thebes, of On, of white-walled Memphis, are but attributes of the one beneficent sun-god, of Aton the Glorious, the Life-giver, who dwelleth within the Sun!

“Henceforth, let Aton, not Amen, be upon

Pharaoh Exalts a Foreign God 151

your lips! Let Aton, not Amen, be upon the lips of your children! Thus, as in times past, Egypt shall worship one god from Nubia to Suan of the North. May Aton's bright beams embrace you! May Aton's rays forever enfold you!"

Across the flashing waters of the Nile, where the great temple of Karnak raised its giant pylons high above the palm groves which fronted it, Huy, Great High Priest of Amen, frowned darkly as the sound of the loud applause which followed Pharaoh's speech, reached his ears.

To Huy and the prophets of Amen that sound heralded the beginning of a war to the death.

But Enana, the Magician, did but smile.

CHAPTER XI

THE STATUE OF AMEN DISAPPEARS

IN Thebes a religious drama was enacted annually, a drama in which was portrayed the eternal conflict waged between Amen, the sun-god, and Apep, Prince of Darkness.

Unknown to the peasant, as indeed to many a priestly participant, the story of the drama, in truth, perpetuated the prehistoric invasion of Egypt by those "Followers of Horus" who had subdued, and, eventually, become absorbed by the original inhabitants of the Nile Valley.

At that early date, Thebes had been but a small village, a cluster of mud huts and a small shrine, over whose walls rose the emblem of the primitive cult.

Since that time, three thousand years had come and gone, and Thebes had become the richest and most powerful city of the ancient world.

The Statue of Amen Disappears 153

Now, since Horus, son of Hathor, was the leader of the victorious invaders, and the two great battles had taken place at Nekhen and Abdu—Thebes being entirely outside the field of operations—the various incidents enacted in this great religious spectacle had nothing whatever to do with Thebes nor, indeed, with its famed local deity, the sun-god Amen.

But the priests of Amen's great temple at Thebes had always looked with envy at the popularity of the yearly spectacle as enacted in the two rival cities. Thus, when finally a Theban prince became Pharaoh, the first care of the Chief Prophet of Amen had been to get the royal seal affixed to a permit looking toward the perpetual endowment of a similar festival in his own city of Thebes, a six days' wonder that should utterly eclipse anything of which Nekhen, Abdu or any other rival god or city could boast.

In the drama as presented at Thebes, the son of Hathor became the sun-god Amen of Thebes.

The "Followers of Horus" were personified by Theban priests, local notables and others.

As to the "Followers of Set," the enemies in the drama, such miscreants were portrayed by unhappy foreign slaves, criminals and the like, many of whom were sacrificed before the altar of the sun-god, following the conclusion of the customary mimic battle and mock attempt to carry off the holy statue of Amen.

The great Theban festival called for a full week of continued merrymaking. Military tournaments were instituted, athletic contests took place; boat races were a daily occurrence along the river front. In the palace magical contests were held, the wisdom of ancient sages was discussed, or great prophets of the day were brought before Pharaoh's throne.

In the latter case Pharaoh heard, at first hand, of the marvelous deeds of magic under the ancestors of the Pyramid Age, or was admonished to give more thought to his oppressed and hungry people.

One stalwart hermit had had the temerity to

The Statue of Amen Disappears 155

prophecy the overthrow of Pharaoh and the coming of "a righteous king," under whom Egypt would return to the blissful state of long ago, "before death was," and mankind, both native and foreign, would become united in an international brotherhood which would make one the lands of men and the Blessed Fields of Aaru, the abode of the gods!

The rash prophet was not handed to the strangler, but led courteously from the Presence. An order for a tomb, a fine limestone coffin, and a tomb-statue, followed him to his distant home. During the Feast of the Apts, one might speak one's true mind, even before Majesty.

To-day, the day of "bringing in the god," crowds jostled and pushed along every Theban lane and alley. Everyone sought the Avenue of Sphinxes, or the River Road. The latter route, which extended from the main pylon of the Temple to the Sacred Quay, was policed along its short extent by a double line of foreign spearmen.

The two-horse chariot of the chief of these mercenaries dashed madly up the well guarded course, turned and disappeared down the long Avenue of Sphinxes which led to the Southern Temple. The Chief would take one last survey of the flower-strewn route before the "Appearance of the sun-god" should commence.

The gold statue of Amen the Hidden One, would presently be taken from the Holy of Holies in the dim shrine of the Northern Apt, and escorted up-stream on the Sacred Barge to the jeweled sanctuary of the Temple of the Southern Apt.

Before the open cedar doors of the temple Pharaoh himself might be seen upon his portable throne of gold and ivory, high above the shoulders of twenty-four priestly bearers. As usual, his tame lion stood upon the dais at its royal master's side.

The grand procession now moved forward. It was headed by a priest, who solemnly burned incense in a long hawk-headed bronze censer. All about him musicians played and women-of-

The Statue of Amen Disappears 157

the-temple, women playing to the mystical harem of the god, sang the adorations to the sun-god. Two other groups marked time by clapping of hands and playing of ivory castanets.

Immediately in front of the king's throne marched serried ranks of kilted Egyptian soldiers, singing as they went. Their raw-hide shields moved across their naked breasts in time with the music. At the close of each verse they lifted their short spears or axes above their heads and shouted a short but resounding: "Hai! Amen! Ya—hai! Amen!"

Soon the long lines of onlookers had taken up the refrain, and the limpid air of the Capital thrilled to the wild cries of "Hai! Amen! Ya—hai! Amen!" As the gold throne of the Monarch advanced, groups of white-robed nobles fell into line behind it.

Then followed a long line of women from the Temples of Amen, Mut and Khonsu, who marked the time of the hymn of praise by shaking golden sistra and rattling *menats*, short

but thick necklaces of beryl, amethyst and carnelian beads. With much beating of drums and clicking of castanets a group of feathered negroes pressed close after the singers.

There followed another long line of soldiers, Egyptian, Asiatic, Nubian, Libyan, and, finally, a little group of Cretans, remarkable not so much for the breadth of their shoulders as for the slimness of their waists, "hornet waisted" they had been nicknamed by the Thebans. These latter were almost lost behind their enormous ox-hide shields.

Each group carried its own special type of weapon, since there were definite regiments of archers, axemen, spearmen and slingers, and each company was headed by its own device or standard bearer.

At last the heavy bronze doors of the Temple of Amen slowly opened and a seemingly unending line of white-robed priests issued from the deep shadows of the stupendous pylons.

High upon their gleaming shoulders rested portable barques containing the various sacred

The Statue of Amen Disappears 159

deities belonging to the various temples which were well-nigh hidden by the lofty enclosure walls. Certain priests offered incense to these gods, at intervals, along the whole extent of the route.

In the midst of one group might be seen a number of spirited bulls, with horns decorated in gold. Great yokes of flowers and sweet-smelling leaves were hung about their throats.

Trailing out behind these last followed a long line of priests carrying the standards of the gods, since the whole company of the Blessed Gods marched, unseen, in this great procession.

A renewed wave of cheering went up as the linen-draped shrine of Amen appeared. A vacant place was kept clear behind it, in which marched the "souls" of dead kings! Thirty-six tall priests carried this Holy of Holies towards a gleaming barge, moored to the water's edge at the Sacred Quay. Over two hundred feet long, this barge was built throughout its entire extent of cedar from the Lebanon Terraces. Its sides were covered to the water's edge with

pure Nubian gold. Enormous necklaces of gold were hung at prow and stern. The "Two eyes of Horus," at the prow, were inlaid in brilliant blue lazuli from Babylon. The great checkered linen sail, which lay furled upon the silver deck, was of the square Egyptian type. It was decorated with squares of red and blue embroidery.

There was now as much noise and excitement on the river as on shore. The captains of fifty great painted barges awaited the signal to pull up their mooring-stakes as soon as the Sacred Barge should be well under way. Were it possible, the startled air trembled to still louder shouts as excited overseers, taskmasters and men commenced to pull at the great towing ropes. The swift Nile current made it necessary that the barge be dragged up-stream by a whole army of young and lusty Egyptians.

Along the line of route people began to disappear from the gayly decorated windows. The last scene of the day's ceremony was about to take place within the still unfinished forecourt of the Southern Temple of Amen.

The Statue of Amen Disappears 161

Carrying-chairs were frantically demanded, but soon abandoned, as who could make headway in that fashion in the midst of such a crowd? A few fortunate people managed to squeeze through the broad square lined with its rows of booths, where slaves were hastily preparing wine, fruit, flowers and incense or cutting up the unfortunate bulls as part of the "beautiful festival of the Apt."

Pharaoh offered incense to his father Amen as four exalted members of the priesthood poured out wine from festooned jars of painted pottery. With the exception of these four noblemen, high initiates of the Sorcerers of Amen and Huy, the Great High Priest, no one could witness the taking of the image of Amen from its jeweled shrine and its transference to the silver tabernacle within the granite naos which stood, beside "the position which the king takes," deep within the gloom of the upper temple.

Pharaoh himself, though the personification of Amen, dare not venture beyond that fixed

“position,” a spot marked by a huge block of turquoise from the Sinaitic mines, set in the richly painted wall of the upper temple.

Around the great forecourt, the nobles knelt or stood, according as they belonged to the two rival factions of Amen or Aton.

To the latter group, this marked what was no doubt the very last procession of its kind. Hence these adherents of Aton, the Syrian God, stood stiffly in the background. A covert smile might have been noted on many a swarthy face among them.

Pharaoh's expression was one of cold indifference.

Throughout the whole scene the apathetic monarch seemed not to be conscious of where he was or of what he was doing. It is true, he successfully finished each and every detail of the exacting ritual of Amen. But, what he did, he did mechanically.

The last mock-reverence finished, Pharaoh retired.

The Statue of Amen Disappears 163

As his throne was borne swiftly toward the royal barge, his mask of impassibility vanished. He sank back and allowed his gaze to travel from one side to the other. There was an air of expectancy in each turn of his head. He even went so far as to bow to the acclamations of his people, and this not a little to their bewilderment, since Pharaohs, in public, were customarily, at best, but breathing statues.

Scarcely had the king set foot upon the deck of his beautiful barge, "Star of the Gods," when a frightful tumult broke out along the bank, immediately fronting the great barge of Amen. Wild shrieks from the women-of-the-temple, hoarse and angry cries from the men, intermingled with mocking laughter and shouts of derision.

A great crowd of angry priests of Amen might be seen pushing their way through the dense crowd which was massed in front of the giant statues of Thothmes, whose temple stood near by. Frantic attempts were being made by

the priests of Amen to burst through this crowd. Yet each insistent attempt ended in failure, as did a last charge in one serried block.

The crowd itself was by now so divided into factions that blows were falling right and left, and hapless people were constantly being trampled under foot.

Shrieking: "Sacrilege! Sacrilege!" the priests turned and rushed headlong to their boats.

The Holy Figure of the Hidden One, the sacred Statue of Amen, the sun-god, had disappeared.

The followers of Aton had scored their first success, and that success one of tremendous import!

CHAPTER XII

ENANA CALLS TO HIS AID THE GODS JUSTICE AND VENGEANCE

THE nameless horror that had driven the youthful Unis from his side had no terrors for Enana the Magician.

Enana stood bathed in the palpitating glow of the self-illuminated Book. Slowly he approached his hands to its cover, a cover as white as the sandals of the gods themselves.

The instant Enana's shriveled fingers came in contact with its radiance, a sudden change came over him. Enana's face glowed; a circle of light played about his head. His eyes blazed with a light of triumph.

Holding the Magic Book before him, he commenced to sway back and forth, back and forth, like some mystic of the temple about to prophesy.

The aged Magician began to speak, softly at

first, but with a flow of words that scarcely waited for breath.

“What saith the son of Hap? Seek the Book of Thoth. Eat not, drink not, sleep not, until the Book is found! Two magic formulæ hath the Book! Recite the first and thou shalt charm the sky, the earth, the moon, the heights, the depths! Thou shalt converse with the birds. Thou shalt understand the sayings of the fish and reptiles!

“Recite the second and, even though thy desire be among the Silent Ones, the Dead, yet shall thou have power to raise them upon their feet in the forms and with the hearts their mothers gave them.

“By the Double Spell thou shalt produce a Rising of the Moon at will. Thou shalt be enabled to stop the Sun’s Ascension. Yea, thou shalt darken the faces of both Sun and Moon. By the Double Spell thou shalt see the Ascension of Ra and the Cycle of the Gods.

“Recited at the full of the Moon, thou shalt master the Hidden Names of the Gods, whereby

Enana Seeks the Gods' Aid 167

thou shalt become possessed of their amulets and talismans. Yea, thou shalt become greater than Ra himself!"

Slowly Enana the Magician opened the Book. In characters of gold the secret incantations of the gods were spread before him. Here appeared the Secret Names of the Six White Gods of Day and the Six Black Gods of Night. Here were the irresistible words of power that could stop the planets in their courses and Ra in his passage of the sky. Here again were the Mystic Names of Thoth and Set. Here were the dread *hekau*-spells that could revivify the dead or consign the living to annihilation and their "doubles" to extinction.

Enana closed the magic book. Carefully he placed it in his bosom. The soft effulgence at once disappeared.

Leaving the little chamber, Enana stood upon the terrace. Below and about him stretched the city, the city of the dead. A rift of dully gleaming waters and, beyond it, lay another city, the city of the living.

A dull roar, a deep murmur, as of many voices, came up to him where he stood. In honor of the annual Feast of the Apts, lights were breaking out alike in temple, palace and peasant hut.

To-night the doors would be left open. Thus would the living welcome the "souls" of their dead.

Already lines of flickering torches showed where many a devout *ka*-servant, together with priests to assist him, could be seen winding along the well-beaten paths or marching up the inclined planes of the sphinx or tree-bordered avenues by which the royal mortuary-temples were approached.

The Feast of the Apts was indeed, as it was often styled, a veritable "Feast of Lights."

Enana gazed northward. Across the river, a bright circle of lights showed where his brother-priests of Amen had commenced the encircling of the walls of Amen's temple. Huy and his brother-priests still put on a bold front.

Fires were lit at intervals along the Nile em-

Enana Seeks the Gods' Aid 169

bankments. The river itself now reflected many a fire that leaped, died, and leaped into life again, along the great quay fronting the temple of the Southern Apt.

Nearer, scarcely a stone's throw away, it seemed, appeared the lights of the innumerable lamps which served to illuminate the pleasure-barge of Thi, the Queen-Mother. As Enana well knew, Pharaoh and his immediate family were accustomed to join the nightly fête from this point of vantage.

Enana raised his hands in the direction of the broad patch of buildings and trees which marked at once the royal palace and the nearby villa of Menna, the Overseer.

Suddenly a brilliant meteor shot from the highest zenith and seemed to bury itself in the waters of the palace lake. Enana's voice rose upon the night air:

An omen, Pharaoh! an omen Thi! an omen Menna!
By the Power of the Book, closed to ye are
The gates of the Sky. Closed to ye are
The Double Doors of Heaven!

Ye shall not cross the Lily Lake of the Sky,
Ye shall not sail upon the Boat with Ra!
The Magic Vestments shall not be spread for ye!
The White Sandals shall be hidden from ye!
Yea, by the Secret Names I know, by the
Hidden Talismans I possess, your bodies
Shall be destroyed; your tombs shall know
Them not! Your *kas* shall not stand behind ye!
Your *bas* shall not sit upon your tombs!
Annihilation is your portion; obliteration
Your destiny!

Enana's voice rose to a shrill falsetto; his
whole form seemed to tremble as he cried aloud
the first dread incantation:

Thoth! Thoth! Thoth!
Come to my aid in thy name of Wisdom!
Set! Set! Set!
Descend to me in thy name of Evil!
Turn thy face earthward, O Thoth!
Turn thy face earthward, O Set!
Enter my heart, Ye Gods; let thy
Hearts become my heart; thy wisdom
My Wisdom.
I know thy Hidden Names, O Thoth!
Thy Talismans are before me, O Set!
Thoth thou art compelled, Set thou art
Compelled. Hither to me, O Wisdom! Hither
To me, O Evil!
Send inspiration, O Thoth! Grant opportunity, O Set!

Enana Seeks the Gods' Aid 171

As the aged Magician's voice shrilled out upon the night air Bata, the unhappy Unis' aged nurse, suddenly awoke.

Softly she stole down the corridor from a chamber at the rear of the tomb, where she usually slept. Bata reached the open door just in time to hear Enana command the very gods to descend to earth. The horrified Bata fell in a faint across the threshold.

When at length Bata returned to consciousness, she somehow managed to crawl back to her room, dumb with terror. Bata had seen the old Magician's trembling form aglow with a mystic light, his upturned face shining with some inward flame. Before him, out of the gloom there had suddenly appeared two heavily cloaked figures. Bata never doubted but that the tall forms were those of the great gods Thoth and Set.

CHAPTER XIII

RAMSES AND SESEN

THE youthful Ramses, leader of the recent successful expedition against the Nubians, had won for himself many titles of distinction. Yet, chief among these undoubtedly, was his new appointment to the rank of Fan-Bearer-on-the-Right-of-Pharaoh.

The post of Fan-Bearer was an office eagerly sought by the more exalted nobles, since it gave one the ear of Pharaoh, as did perhaps no other position at Court. The one possible exception was the post held by Dedu, son of Den, through four generations at least, the coveted post of Keeper-of-the-King's-Robes.

The title of Fan-Bearer had been given Ramses by Pharaoh at Thi's earnest solicitation. The Queen-Mother had been prompted to this step through no love she bore the youthful soldier, but as part of a plan which was intended

to lull the stubborn adherents of Amen into a sense of false security.

The aged Enana, grandfather to Ramses, was the subject of the Queen-Mother's especial detestation. Indeed, detestation was by far too mild a word to express her feelings in respect to the old magician.

By conferring the title of Fan-Bearer upon Enana's grandson, Thi hoped to put Enana and the other followers of Amen off their guard. For, would not the very title imply a definite and continuous sojourn in the capital?

Yet, of late, Thi felt that the attempt to keep the young soldier near the Court had been ill-advised. For various rumors, vague hints of an alarming nature, had reached the ears of Menna the Overseer.

These ill-defined rumors had been promptly reported to Thi, with various embellishments, of course, on the part of Menna, son of Menna.

Without a doubt, someone who knew the Court, someone who was familiar with the secret intrigues of harem life in the palace, had

been quietly spreading broadcast palace secrets of a most terrifying nature.

One report had it that the present Pharaoh was a Syrian, born before Thi's parents came down into Egypt.

It was hinted that Yakab the Chancellor was his true father. Had they not both the same extraordinarily attenuated figure? Did not both suffer from the same racking cough? Did not both speak with a marked lisp? Thi, the Queen-Mother, was almost stout; the late Pharaoh had been a corpulent man, in his youth possessed of unusual strength. The face was that of Thi, perhaps, but the body that of Yakab the Chancellor!

Yes, it was plain that Thi had done away with Pharaoh's former wife, the Lady Hanit; that Menna and Thi had planned the murder of the true heir to the throne, the Lady Hanit's son, in order that Yakab's son, by Thi, might ascend the Egyptian throne,

Finally it was whispered that the murdered Prince still lived; that he had escaped from

Menna, son of Menna, into whose baleful charge he had been placed.

All unwittingly, Ramses had been drawn into this maelstrom of palace intrigue. His name was frequently mentioned in connection with the probable succession to the throne.

The subject of a successor to the Horus Throne was one of great importance at this moment. Queen Noferith had borne the king but girls—"five little beams of Shu the sun-god" their royal father had playfully called them. And of these one had recently become the perfume of the heavenly lotus which the sun-god holds to his august face!

Pharaoh felt sure that Ramses himself knew nothing of these rumors. In many a bitter discussion with his mother and Menna the Overseer Pharaoh had frequently stated his conviction that Ramses would utterly condemn such traitorous thoughts should they ever come to his ears.

Pharaoh had loved Ramses like a brother. He had admired him as some superior being.

For a time neither Menna's craftily embellished reports nor Thi's openly avowed hatred of Enana's grandson could turn Pharaoh from his blind trust in the good faith of his boyhood's hero.

Himself ever a sickly child, Pharaoh had sighed for his coming of age, that he might take the field with Ramses, and be himself a witness of the latter's many deeds of valor.

For years had Pharaoh pictured himself in the famous Warbonnet of the Pharaohs, that bright blue headdress which Thothmes and a long line of heroic forebears had carried far into the ranks of their stricken foes and, with one exception, returned in safety to their acclaiming people. Yes, even King Sequenen's horrible death, at the hands of the Hyksos invaders, was better far than his present life of inaction, a life varied only by tiresome harem plots, counterplots and the probabilities of a general religious or civil upheaval.

But Pharaoh, under Thi's baleful influence, was as pliable as the clay in the deft fingers of

the potter. The Queen-Mother presently took fright at these oft-repeated and ever highly-colored rumors, and it was not long before she and Menna had convinced Pharaoh that the grandson of Enana, at Thebes, was a constant menace.

Thus, when "the rewards of the King" were yet warm in Ramses' hands, that happy young warrior was dismayed to receive a roll of papyrus, straight from the hands of Majesty, a brief note whose finely written contents necessitated another exile from Sesen, from Thebes and the home he so dearly loved, the villa of Enana the Magician, his grandsire. Ramses was commanded to depart for the north with the setting of the morrow's sun, there to take over the Egyptian army guarding the hostile frontier in Asia. Bitter disappointment, and somewhat of anger, caused the voice of Ramses to tremble as he directed his chairmen to set him down at Enana's villa.

The home of Ramses' grandsire was built upon a circular island on the western side of

the Nile. Seen from a distance, this island appeared to float upon the quiet waters. The low white walls which surrounded its garden, its branching cedars, full crested palms and feathery mimosa trees, were mirrored in the waters of the inundation.

Enana the Magician had felt called upon to live comparatively near to Semet, Thebes' unending burial ground, since, during the former monarch's lifetime he had been appointed "Guardian of the Royal Tombs."

Enana was proud of his skill in necromancy; Enana was even more proud of his knowledge of astrology, botany, medicine and of his intimate acquaintance with the Magic Scrolls of the Conjurers and Sorcerers of Amen. But, above all else, Enana enjoyed hearing himself addressed as Guardian of the Ancestors, whenever a summons from Majesty or a Court Function had necessitated his presence at the Palace. Alas, as far as Enana and Renet, his wife, were concerned, such functions had long since ceased!

Nevertheless, to-day was a gala day with

Enana, a day of rejoicing to his entire household. For to-day Enana, son of Enana, had arrived at the ever-prayed for one hundred and ten years!

One other living person alone could boast of such a record and that was the father of Thi, the Queen-Mother. But Iuya was only a nobleman by courtesy, an Asiatic, an heretical believer in Aton. Enana scorned Iuya as a pretentious old scoundrel, who spent the major part of his time decrying everything Egyptian and lauding Syria, and all things Syrian.

All morning had the aged Magician, and the Lady Renet, his wife, sat beside the garden pool listening to the effusive congratulations of his friends, his neighbors, and the many members of his house and wide domain.

All that morning his bustling servants had been busy arranging the various presents along the awning-shaded corridor which faced the tree-set garden.

Bars and collarettes of gold, electrum and silver; bead stands of lazuli, malachite, crystal,

carnelian, amethyst, beryl, jasper; great pendants in gold, silver or bright blue fayence; finger-rings of gold encrusted with colored pastes or set with little green glazed beetles, carved in stone and engraved below with felicitous expressions; treasures big and little were piled high in seemingly innumerable vessels and exposed on brightly painted wooden tables or stands along the halls and corridors.

Clusters of white, soft pink or pale blue lotus flowers were bound about frames bent to represent the *anekh* or sign of "longevity." The *nofer* or sign of "happiness," in the shape of little lutes, hung from every branch in the garden.

There had been but one thing lacking in a morning of never-to-be-forgotten successes. As Khufu the Butler had remarked, not a single member of the Royal House had visited their honored master; not even a Royal Usher had come with the customary messages of felicitation or with the usual "gold of honor." To Khufu, as to the other devoted servants of the

aged Magician, this neglect was the occasion of grave concern.

Not so to Enana! Well he knew the reason of this breach of courtesy, this public affront.

Enana's early training had been behind the walls of Amen's great temple in the Apt. There for years had he served Amen, God of Thebes, as chorister, incense-bearer, lector, *keri heb* and, lastly, as Chief Magician.

Enana was known as a devoted follower of Amen, as an ardent and incorruptible believer in the power of the greatest of all gods, Amen of Thebes. As such he knew well that he had incurred the undying hatred of Thi the Syrian, whose one ambition in life, now that her son was established on the throne, was the overthrow of Amen and the destruction of all the other local gods of Egypt. If Thi could compass it, Aton, the Syrian sun-god, should be the sole object of worship from Suan of the north to Suan of the south.

At the present moment, however, Enana had pushed from his mind all thoughts of Thi. All

his present enjoyment was centered in the scheme next his heart and in his anticipation of seeing Ramses, his grandson, whom it mostly concerned.

At any moment the young soldier might dash through the gate in that impetuous way so dear to the frail old man.

Enana sat with his wrinkled hands resting upon the squares of gold leaf with which his tunic was faced. His beady black eyes were fixed upon the open door, his ears alert to catch the first shout of Ramses' bearers, as they rounded the great Mortuary Temple near by. From time to time his hand went to his bosom where rested the magic book.

But the sun-god began his descent into the realms of darkness, lights broke out in the distant city, a line of chanting priests bearing torches appeared upon the walls of Amen-hotep's temple, the light upon the high stand at Enana's elbow was lit. Yet Ramses did not come.

Ah, Enana, but a little patience! Magician

though thou art, the Goddess Hathor is more powerful than thou!

Even as Ramses had finished reading the royal command and set his hand to the arm of his carrying-chair, Senab the Usher advanced bowing and handed him a second note.

Joy lit up the stern face of the young soldier as he read; a sudden animation seemed to fill his whole being. Bidding his chairmen await him in the outer court, he turned and followed Seneb, the Usher, through the columned aisles of the Audience Hall.

Arrived before the line of granite sphinxes which fronted the Treasury of Silver, Seneb bowed again, turned on his heel and left him.

Three women stood beneath a doorway which fronted the innermost court. Eagerly Ramses advanced as the form of the Princess Sesen stepped out from its shadows:

“Sesen, they told me thou wert with thy Father in Thinis! Had I known, in truth, that the Palace held thee, I would have come to claim thy promised reward.

“By Hathor! Thou are more radiantly beautiful than when I left thee last! How often have I lain awake at night thinking of thee. The hot nights upon the desert sand passed quickly, restfully, for dreams of thee!

“Sesen, thou knowest all my love, all my hopes are centered in thee. What are the rewards of Majesty to the reward that thou hast promised me—thyself. Look! I have kept my word. I found the famous jewel which Enana told thee of and—it is thine!”

Slowly Ramses drew from his girdle a great emerald set in gold. A rose-colored band of fine gazelle hide showed it to have been worn about the forehead of its former owner, the Nubian King.

King Shaba will need “the panther’s eye” no more. His ashes lie beneath the smouldering ruins of his palace. Vultures hover above the demolished houses of Napata, his Capital.

Sesen clasped her hands upon her bosom with delight. Without replying she took the jewel from Ramses’ hand and bound it about her

gold-filleted wig. Ramses smiled down upon the happy little maid, as she sank into his arms. The great jewel seemed to glow upon her forehead, as if it pulsed to the rapid beating of her heart:

“Sesen, my Lotus! I love thee, I love thee!”

“And I, Ramses, my hero, feared for thee. Hathor’s altar has groaned beneath the burden of my offerings for thy safe return.”

Her words brought to Ramses’ mind the command of Pharaoh. He had found her but to lose her.

“Dove of Hathor, but a few short weeks and I return to claim thee for the Lady of my House.”

“Thou returnest? Whither goest thou?”

“Alas, my Dove! The King commands that I head the Egyptian host which now stands facing Kheta and her allies in Syria. By to-morrow’s sunset I must leave to help old Noferhotep with his task. Yet, have no fear for me. The Little People, I think, do but try out Noferhotep. He, poor

man, grows weary of the task of waiting, with nothing but patrol work at best to break the monotony of his years of frontier life. Fear not for me. I have thy love, my Sesen! If need be, I could cut my way through Asia, with thy name my battle-cry. To-morrow I will see thee after the morning service. The Lady Renet and her maids will come to escort thee to our house for the betrothal. Breath of Ra, how happy will she be, she and Enana, my grandsire. Now must I hurry to them. As thou knowest, 'tis a gala day with my grandsire. May Hathor bless thee, my Sesen; may Aah cast her protecting beams about thee."

For an instant the lovers held one another in a close embrace. The next, Ramses had mounted his chair. As he did so, twinkling lights broke out among the dark patch of trees in which stood Enana's distant villa.

CHAPTER XIV

A RASH PROMISE

IN his wooing of the Lady Sesen, Menna, son of Menna, worked tirelessly. Menna had been born upon the fifth of Paophi, and who does not know that a child born upon that auspicious day is ever successful in affairs of the heart!

Following his gift to her of Bhanar, the beautiful Syrian, each day brought to Sesen bunches of grapes, bursting pomegranates or succulent dates from Menna's famous gardens. Frequently there were left at her door bags of powdered gold or lazuli for the floor of her rooms, or the choicest of fragrant oils and perfumes for her toilet. These last were sealed in little jars of rich blue glass or in black obsidian vases capped with gold.

To-day Sesen opened an ebony coffer richly inlaid with ivory and gold. Enclosed within she

found a frail wooden spoon, an incense spoon, carved to represent a little maiden stretched at full length in the attitude of a swimmer. The names and titles of Menna, the Overseer, appeared upon this exquisite work of art, yet, if truth be told, Renny the Syrian had fashioned it.

As with Menna's other gifts, a closely written sheet of fine papyrus accompanied the gift, whereon Sesen read of Menna's passionate desire for a meeting. Enana had advised her to fan the flame of Menna's passion for reasons he kept to himself. What would he say to this effusion?

The lines were written alternately in letters of red and black:

The cool zephyrs of the Northland can alone extinguish
the flame of my love!
I am become like the dried mimosa, ripe for the baker's
oven,
The fire of her eyes hath withered it.
When the dove pours forth its plaintive song, Sesen ap-
pears beneath the sycamore.
Her slender form is mirrored in the garden pool.

Seeing her, the Moon-goddess pines away with jealousy;
the Sun-god bids her shine in his stead.

A full moon is her gleaming face;

The brightness of day glows upon her forehead;

Her full throat gleams like the crystals which encircle it;

The rose of the flamingo's wing is upon her cheek;

Her eyes, painted with black Thinite kohl, were the gift of
Hathor at her birth,

The fires that burn within them scatter flaming darts;

Countless as the desert sands are the victims of those eyes!

Waving is her slender form, like the palm trees of Erment.

The dark shades of night hide in her hair, fragrant with
musk and myrrh.

A pomegranate is her mouth, her little teeth bright mother-
of-pearl.

By day she perfumes the air with the odors of the Incense
Land.

Her luster illuminates the darkest night!

Ah, deign to heed my pleading, Daughter of Hathor!

As apart from thee, I am as one among the Silent Ones;
as one whose mouth has not been opened.

Ask the Moon-goddess of my bitter state.

She will tell thee that I am indeed the ally of sorrow and
anguish.

With a frown Sesen tore the note into little
pieces and went on with her interrupted game
of draughts with Merit-aton, Pharaoh's eldest
daughter.

Until Menna had stumbled upon Renny, the

Syrian, hawking his despised figurines in the inhospitable streets of Thinis, Beq, an Egyptian sculptor attached to his house, had served Menna the Overseer as messenger.

For Menna, when not on duty at the Palace, was accustomed to rise late. Menna's mornings were spent at the bath. Indeed, it not infrequently happened that the sun had begun his downward flight across the heavens before the lordly Overseer had succeeded in escaping from the ministrations of his slaves.

For several hours he must perforce suffer the attentions of his body-servants, his wig-keeper, sandal-bearer, perfumer, and the keeper of his jewels.

Thus, one stalwart Ethiopian, having finished rubbing his handsome frame with aromatic oils, another slipped about him the tunic and overdress of the day. And what to an ordinary mortal constituted a tight tunic, appeared to Benkhu, the Prince's body-servant, positively loose and ill-fitting.

And since Menna affected extremes, his tunic

fitted far more closely, his voluminous and richly plaited over-dress swung out in far more ample folds, than those of any other of the foppish members of the Theban Court.

Indeed, Menna left Benkhu's nimble fingers dressed as few others of the courtiers could be dressed.

His costuming completed, Menna listened to the reports of his farm overseers, and to those of his spies both of court, bazaar and temple. For Menna, though outwardly faithful to Aton, still continued to hold the honorific post of Scribe of the Estates of Amen.

His business attended to, Menna essayed a game of draughts with one of his friends, or rowed about the lake in Thi's pleasure-barge. It was the policy of Menna never to be far from Thi, the Queen-Mother.

When Renny, the Syrian, had been enrolled among the retainers of Menna, the Overseer had affected to see much of him. He went to the length of separating Renny from Beq and the native Egyptian craftsmen attached to his

house. He even provided Renny with a studio to himself.

To this workshop Menna himself would come at times, ostensibly to seek instruction in modeling, sculpture and wood-carving. As a matter of fact his visits were prompted by the desire to use Renny and *his* art as in former times he had that of Beq and the native craftsmen.

Renny fell in with this whim of his powerful patron. Many a minor ornament, such as a small lotus bowl, incense-spoon or sacred image, had Renny produced, without neglecting to leave some slight detail for the handsome Overseer to finish. Renny's artistic productions Menna incontinently made his own, adding *his* name and titles together with the date of its completion.

Coming from the hand of such a critical student of the arts, these small, but ever choice mementoes were eagerly sought at Court. No one doubted but that they were the work of the gifted Overseer himself.

Of late gifts and mementoes of this sort had suddenly ceased to materialize, and Menna,

taxed with laziness by his friends at Court, gave it to be understood that a far more important undertaking now engaged his time. But the true reason of the present inaction of the Overseer was due to Renny, the Syrian.

That unhappy youth, in his constant visits to the Palace to deliver his masters' gifts and notes to Sesen, had seen all too much of the beautiful Princess.

Yet, a single visit, and that his first, had proved more than enough to cause the beauty-loving Renny to come beneath the spell of Sesen's haunting loveliness.

Do what he would to conceal his senseless passion, Renny felt that the fire at his heart would mount to his eyes, the surging blood, that seemed ever about to burst his heart, would flame into his cheeks.

At one moment Renny soared into the highest heavens; the next found him plunged into the gloomiest despair. He, an unknown sculptor, a despised foreigner, dared to lift his eyes to an exalted lady of the Egyptian Court!

Knowing too well the hopelessness of his present position, Renny sought to hide his passion.

Unluckily for the distracted sculptor, his burning hand had come in contact with the tapering fingers of the Princess.

Straightway Renny had thrown himself upon his knees and poured out to her startled ears the torrent of passionate words which had so long trembled upon his lips. Renny lost his head; his discretion vanished to the four winds of Heaven.

Sesen gazed down at the bowed head of the young sculptor in utter bewilderment. She could not have said whether she was more surprised, angered or amused. She clapped her hands twice; she would hand him to the guards. Yet, as the archers appeared from behind the columns of the courtyard, she changed her mind. A sudden wave of tenderest sympathy for Bhanar swept over the Princess. So it was not Bhanar he had sought so eagerly. Her heart ached for the quiet little maid standing so still and mute behind her. She turned to Bhanar:

“So this is that Renny, the Incomparable, of whom thou hast so often spoken, my Bhanar! Dare men so address a Princess of the Blood in thine own country and live? Like master, like man!”

Renny leaped to his feet, his face aflame with various emotions, amongst which wounded pride, perhaps was not the least.

“Lady! Since when is it considered a deed ill-done that a man should speak the love and reverence which he bears a maid? The mirror in thy hand should tell thee that few could look upon a face so fair, a form that Hathor’s self must envy, and not be stricken with that malady which not even the King’s physician hath power to cure! That I love thee I cannot help. My heart beats to thoughts of thee; thy image is stamped upon my very eyes!

“As to my master, the Lord Menna, I serve the Prince from gratitude. He found me well nigh starving in the streets of Thinis and gave me food and shelter. All my work he purchased and put me in the place of Beq, a sculptor whose work is excellent, according to your Egyptian

standard. His portrait of thee I myself have much admired.

“Yet, Most Beautiful, ’tis not thee! ’Twould answer as well for any Lady of the Court. Were *I* to model thee, Fragrance of the Gods, thou shouldst see a living, breathing ‘double’ of thyself, thy very *ka* in stone. This I could prove to thee as could no other.”

During this conversation Bhanar had continued to ply the ostrich-feather fan above her mistress’s head. Anguish for Renny, pity for herself, showed in her beautiful eyes.

Sesen’s heart bled for her. Sesen knew Bhanar’s history well. Bhanar never tired of talking about her beloved village, of her dear Rippa, nestled among the distant Syrian hills.

The little Princess had soon perceived that Bhanar’s girlish love for her childhood’s companion had ripened into something stronger.

She had soon noticed how artfully Bhanar managed to forestall Sesen’s other maids whenever Renny’s name was announced by the usher.

Renny’s joy and relief at finding her in the

household of the Princess had been genuine, since for a time, he had felt that he and Yakab had failed her. Thereafter, at each and every visit to the Palace, he had quite naturally sought his beautiful country-woman. He knew that through her he would the more readily reach the lady of his master's infatuation.

Renny had strict orders to deliver his master's notes into the hand of Sesen in person. This at first he could never have accomplished, had it not been for Bhanar's assistance.

This insistence of Renny to reach her through Bhanar alone Sesen had misinterpreted.

Then came that fatal day when Bhanar listened to Renny as he poured out his tale of love for her mistress. Bhanar's heart seemed to stop its beating. From that moment she realized that she loved Renny with all the love that he—that he, alas, felt for Sesen, her mistress.

At this moment an agonizing sympathy for Renny seemed to freeze her heart. She knew that Renny at best did but provide distraction for the Princess. And now, in this statue of

which he talked, Renny held out still further hopes of diversion. From her frequent visits to Enana's villa, Bhanar knew that the absent Ramses was ever in Sesen's mind, though never once had the little maid referred to him. In vain had she confided her knowledge of the mutual love of Sesen and Ramses to the unheeding Renny.

Sesen turned from the sculptor as if to leave. At the threshold of the steps she paused for a moment:

"Syrian, if you can indeed model such a portrait as that of which you speak, gladly will I purchase it of thee, and with it thy freedom."

The overjoyed Renny kissed the hand she gave him:

"Within the month, Most Beauteous One! Give me but four short weeks and thou shalt see thyself as no one within the confines of the four iron pillars could ever hope to model thee. As to payment, I seek it not. Freedom might lead me away from thee!"

Renny again passionately kissed the jeweled

fingers of the little Princess and dashed from the Court. How he finally managed to reach his studio door, he never knew.

Alas, for Renny and his promise. Even as he left the outer corridor, Bar, chief of his master's spies, glided noiselessly from behind one of the great painted columns nearby.

Thereafter, Menna the Overseer saw to it that Renny sped upon no more missions to the Palace. On the contrary he was sternly warned to keep within his master's villa-garden, and the little workshop which had been provided for him.

Yet, as luck would have it, in order to keep him busily occupied, Menna commanded him to model a statue of Hathor, Goddess of Beauty. This statue, when completed, Menna intended to present to the late Pharaoh's shrine at Amada to the south. But to Renny he omitted to mention that *his* name and his alone would appear upon its ivory pedestal!

CHAPTER XV

A STATUE OF HATHOR. GODDESS OF LOVE

MENNA the Overseer had little conception of the torture he had inflicted upon the mind of the youthful Renny when he forbade him his liberty. Hollow-cheeked and well nigh mad, Renny so far disobeyed his patron's orders that he sat for hours, nay, for days at a time, huddled like a beggar at the Palace gate.

Not even the gentle Bhanar could console him whenever, as so frequently happened, a day went by without its being possible for the distracted youth to catch a glimpse of his idol.

Then, suddenly, he remembered his promise to the Princess. He sought out Khnum, the royal quarryman, who had but now moored to the western bank with a cargo consisting in the main of the precious alabaster of Hatnub. He bribed Khnum to procure him a giant block of

purest alabaster, a mass of the creamiest material which the alabaster quarries could provide.

For days did master-quarryman Khnum seek a block of the unusual proportions demanded by the impatient sculptor. A week went by, an eternity to the tortured artist.

Finally, just as he was about to despatch a second expedition northward, and during the heat of one of the first days of the great sandstorm, Khnum and his sweating assistants hauled a wooden sledge before his dust-covered threshold. And there, high upon the friction-charred vehicle, stood the glossiest block of Hatnub's finest alabaster which the distracted Renny had ever seen.

For many years men spoke of that never-to-be-forgotten sandstorm, a storm which ushered in days of blinding heat, days in which the flints that strewn the desert plateau cracked beneath the excoriating heat; days in which the ochre-hued river banks, confining a blinding reach of sluggish water, the shriveled and blasted syc-

more, tamarisks and palms, nay, the very capital itself, seemed to be confined within the sun-god's fiery furnace.

Day in, day out, those death-dealing rays shot from a changeless vault of steely blue. Down sank the tortured cattle; the birds gasped among the shriveled leaves of the trees. The very soil, by now as hard as any southern granite, yawned with wide-thrown crevices many cubits deep. Far to the south the broad-winged vultures circled slowly earthward from their lofty posts, as if they too feared the darts of the outraged Amen.

It was a sudden and appalling visitation which luckily blew itself out within but four of the customary nine days of blinding wind and sand.

Yet, throughout those four memorable days and thereafter Renny worked as he had never worked before.

Now, there came a day when Menna ordered his carrying-chair and bade his bearers set him down before the door of Renny's workshop.

At the Overseer's repeated knocks the bolts were slowly drawn. Through the barely opened door Renny, blinded by the glare, gazed unseeing toward the extended hand of his smiling patron:

"How now, Syrian? Hast turned magician? Bar tells me thou must needs have conned the *hekau*-spell that bringeth food and drink, since all the food that is brought thee stands untasted. Breath of the Goddess! Why hast sulked behind barred doors these weeks and more?" Menna made as if to step within.

"Ah, master, most noble lord, I do beseech thee, go not within! Bethink thee, Splendor of Thebes, when first I came to thee, thou didst assure to me that privacy which, far more than thy golden *uten*, I did ask of thee! Continue now thy favor some little time, I pray. Thy statue of the Goddess Hathor is . . . !"

"Amemet eat me! Days, nay weeks, have we waited for a sight of it! Now is our sore-tried patience at an end."

With a firmness unexpected in the cus-

tomarily indolent Menna, the Overseer pushed the trembling Renny aside and entered the workshop.

At first, so sudden was the change from the glare of noonday to the murky shadows of the room, that Menna could distinguish nothing. When at last his eyes grew somewhat accustomed to the gloom, he found himself staring at the tinted statue of a regally robed woman, a life-sized figure so startlingly realistic that for a moment he instinctively drew back.

Upon a pedestal festooned with drooping lotus and fragrant mimosa stood the smiling figure of the Princess Sesen. So lifelike did the statue appear to the bewildered noble, that for a space of a full minute, he waited, expecting her lips to part, her tongue to utter the customary greetings.

Once his jeweled fingers had assured him that the figure was but tinted stone, Menna burst into voluble exclamations of wonder and delight.

“Verily, said I not that thou hadst learned

some potent charm, some mighty *hekau*, known but to the blessed gods alone?

“Breath of Hathor! ’Tis the work of Ptah, nay, of Khnum himself, Fashioner of Mankind! None but a god could thus turn stone to flesh, put breath in the nostrils, life in the eye!

“Ah Syrian! if this be Syrian art, my heated arguments were but wasted breath! Compared to our Egyptian figures, shackled, mummified, as lifeless as the granite they are carved in, here stands grace and freedom, life itself!

“By the Theban Triad, the very blind would know this figure for the Princess, the Lady Sesen . . . !”

Menna broke off abruptly. Sesen?

Suddenly Menna’s face flamed in anger. Could there indeed be something between the Princess and this slave, this nobody?

Nay, as far as the Princess was concerned, Menna felt sure that Bar’s reports of Renny’s heedless temerity were false. At the moment Menna felt sure that he had good cause to trust

the Princess. He fingered a scented note tucked in his jeweled belt.

But Renny . . . ?

Menna shook his perfumed wig, and turning, spoke the young man's name. Thrice he called, then strode to the half opened door.

Renny had vanished.

With a threatening imprecation the irate Overseer turned once more to the statue.

Yes, here was Hathor, Goddess of Beauty, Goddess of Love, as none in Egypt had ever conceived her!

Menna's brain worked fast. The statue he vowed to make his own. Bar and his minions were despatched to do away with Renny!

What a sensation would this work produce at Court, and especially upon the mind of the art-loving Pharaoh! Menna allowed himself visions of a naturalistic school modeled upon the Syrian, an essentially realistic school which should utterly banish the hieratic canons imposed upon the Egyptian craftsmen by the

dictates of precedent and the will of an all-powerful priesthood.

Meantime, thought the Overseer, the statue must be kept from sight, at least, until Renny was safely out of the way.

He sent off a chairman to bring clay, string and his signet ring. With his own hands he covered the statue with the quarryman's mats which still clustered in one corner of the little chamber.

In less time than it takes to tell it the tinted figure of the little Princess disappeared from sight. Menna closed the door and, slipping to the bronze bolt, bound it with cord and set his scarab-seal upon a clay pellet which he fastened thereto. This done, he hurried home. To-day was a momentous day with Menna, Overseer of the King's Estates.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CURSE OF HUY, GREAT HIGH PRIEST OF AMEN

WHAT Belur the Hittite Ambassador had said, concerning the expected outbreak of a religious war throughout Egypt, was true. Moreover, no one was greatly surprised at his report of the disaffection of Egypt's Asiatic vassals.

In his efforts to establish the cult of the Syrian sun-god, in place of that of the various Egyptian deities, Pharaoh had little time to attend to the exacting affairs of his country's vast empire abroad.

However, Belur's words cannot have taken him altogether by surprise, since runners had brought letters daily from the few faithful vassal-kings along his Syrian border, letters begging help from Egypt.

Indeed, of late, these hints of troubles to come

had resolved themselves into the most urgent appeals for troops to assist in stemming the advance of the dreaded Hittites. Two messengers had Noferhotep sent from the frontier on a like errand. After a protracted delay Pharaoh had despatched one division of Ethiopian troops to his support.

Yet, not until this moment, when a swift cedar boat was carrying Belur and his suite northward, did Pharaoh appreciate to the full the significance of those despairing cries for aid. As he now saw it, Belur had come as spokesman for a combined array of Egypt's Asiatic foes, the very mention of whose names froze the blood in Pharaoh's veins.

Thereafter Pharaoh's spies were very active, along the border.

Time went by, yet nothing happened. Perhaps the boastful words of the Hittite were but intended to intimidate him. Or could it have been that the bold front which he had assumed had in turn deceived the Hittite?

Hearing nothing further of Rimur of Char-

chemish, or of the kings of Kadesh and Megiddo, Pharaoh again took up the work so near his heart. All his best efforts were now centered upon the establishment of the Syrian solar-cult throughout Egypt.

To this drastic move Pharaoh was incited by Yakab and by his mother, Thi, not so much on account of any real love they had for Aton, the Syrian deity, but mainly as a means of ridding themselves of the obstructive influence of Huy, Enana and the powerful priesthood of Amen in Karnak.

Realizing that the vast buildings of Amen's temples in Karnak could never be moved, Thi pointed out to Pharaoh how comparatively easy it would be for him to forsake Thebes and the Palace of Amenhotep, his father, and to erect a new palace, a new city, elsewhere.

To this end Thi had urged Pharaoh to abandon Thebes and had prevailed upon him to erect a new capital, the City of the Sun, far to the north.

It was to raise this new capital, together with

all the houses and villas surrounding it, that thousands of captive slaves were now put to work deep within the quarries of Hatnub, quarries famed alike on account of the superb quality of their fine white limestone and the translucency of their striated alabasters.

In building Pharaoh's new city gigantic blocks in both of these rich materials were brought down from the hills along a specially leveled causeway. Each giant block had been secured upon great wooden sleds of hardened sycamore, and hauled to the new site by the concerted efforts of sweating oxen and groaning sleds.

Overseers were told off to prod the oxen; others to lash the scarred backs of the unhappy Asiatic slaves. The chief of each section occupied himself in pouring water upon the ground to prevent the sled from taking fire by friction, or oil to facilitate the movement of the sled.

When not so engaged the chief sang a love-song in time to the thwack of the overseers' staves, as they further lacerated the bloody

backs of the staggering captives. It was commonly said of a chief of a quarry-gang that he needed but *three* canopic jars at *his* entombment, since he lacked—a heart.

At the site of the new city other dull-eyed Asiatics, similarly flogged into line, worked waist-deep in sandy pits or muddy ditches. Day in, day out, the heavy wooden brick-carriers bit into the cracked and blistered shoulders of emasculated Amu.

Indeed, long before the quickening rays of Aton had mounted above the low hills which shut in the City of the Sun to the east, sweat, mud and blood had baked upon the naked backs of Ethiopian, Libyan, Canaanite and Kheftiu alike. Nay, Egyptians themselves, the down-trodden herdsmen, were as like as not torn from their ripening fields to toil perhaps at pressing bricks for Pharaoh's palace, library and villa, or, cursed, cuffed and beaten by the shrieking taskmasters, to crack their thews at the well-nigh smoking ropes which encircle some colossal shaft, shrine or statue intended for the great temple of the sun-god Aton.

From their lofty posts above the valley watchful vultures craned their necks, as they slowly circled earthward. Such a stupendous undertaking exacted a heavy toll of death.

But what of deserted Thebes, of Huy and the priests of Amen?

Ever since the theft of the cultus-statue of the temple by the Atonites the priests at Karnak had shut themselves up behind the great walls of the Temple of Amen. Behind those massive walls they had continued to intone the ritual of Amen to an empty shrine and the Theban Recitation of the Book of the Dead to deserted courts and forgotten offering-tables. Aton and its ritual they anathematized, though an Aton shrine had, for a time, been forced upon them.

In their present extremity Huy, the great High Priest of Amen, relied for support upon the people, as did indeed his brother hierophants of Memphis, Thinis and Abydos.

Yet, no help came from the priests of Ptah, of Atum, of Osiris. The starving and plague-stricken peasants in whom they trusted failed to assist them.

For their part the peasants well knew that no matter which of the opposing factions gained the upper hand, *their* present state of utter wretchedness would remain unchanged.

What cared they for Amen, Ptah or Aton, when the Nile-god failed them, when Hapi neglected to pour his life-giving waters over their parched and stricken fields!

What was Amen or Aton to them, as they watched their ashen, granite-hard soil crack beneath the pitiless shafts of a ruthless sun-god! 'Twas an ill time to pray to him under any one of his three hundred names.

And so it happened that, at Pharaoh's command, an Atonite force attacked the battle-mented walls of Amen's temple in Karnak.

As a result, the ancient temple of Sesostris was utterly destroyed. Oldest of all the temples within the encircling walls, its cedar columns, its silver floors, its walls of gold inlaid with malachite and lazuli, together with its hundreds of gold and silver statues of the kings of old, all were lost in a conflagration started by the

overturning of a colossal incense-bowl which stood in front of the shadow of the god Min, outlined in silver in the panels of the sanctuary door.

That night Huy, great High Priest of Amen, lay dead, the poisoned cup clenched in his hand.

Yet, before he went forth upon his last long journey across the rocky heights of Duat and the demon-haunted valleys of the Underworld, Huy had arrayed himself in full regalia and taken his stand before the yellow curtain which screened the now empty shrine of the great god Amen.

Aloud he cried, "O Ancient One, Primordial God! By the power of thy Hidden Name, by the Heads of the Demigods that surround thee, hear the prayer of Huy, thy servant!

"Grant that the line of Ahmes be broken! Grant that no child of Pharaoh sit upon thy golden throne!

"Let Pharaoh's name be blotted from remembrance! Let Pharaoh's *ka* be forced to wander among the dunghills of forgotten cities!"

Slowly Huy raised the poisoned cup: "And now, O nameless One, before I go forth upon the way of trial, a token that thou dost grant my prayer. Give me a sign, O Holy One, a sign, O Amen, Lord of Lords!"

As if in answer to the High Priest's cry, there came a sound as of the shaking of distant sistra and silver cymbals. There followed the thrumming of many harps and the sound of reed pipes. Suddenly, through the yellow curtain, there was seen a light which slowly increased in brightness.

In terror the awe-struck priests surrounding Huy hid their eyes. When again they dared to open them, they saw that the great curtain had been rent in two and, below it, stretched at full length, lay the white-robed figure of Huy, their leader.

In sorrow, Antefy, his successor, commanded his bearers to carry him to the chariot of Mei, the Atonite, where seven and seventy times seven at the feet of Pharaoh's victorious representative, in words at least, he fell.

The other disheartened ministers of Amen nominally embraced the Aton creed then and there, or, with Antefy, their new leader, retired to a self-imposed exile among the arid sands of Nubia far to the south.

The fall of Huy and the priests of Amen, seeming to prove the strength and determination of Pharaoh, Memphis, Thinis and Abydos, and thereafter, nearly every local shrine throughout Egypt, at once raised altars to Aton, the Syrian sun-god.

Once again fortune favored the Atonites!

CHAPTER XVII

WHY MENNA'S CHAIRBEARER STAKED HIS ALL

MENNA, Overseer of the King's Estates, was known to the Court as a hard and self-seeking man, and this in spite of his sleekness of skin, his luxurious habits and his untiring efforts to outshine the other "followers of the king" both in beauty of person, knowledge of literature and the arts, indeed, in all those visible evidences of culture which distinguished the Egyptian court.

In spite of this outward display and ostentation Menna, son of Menna, was appreciated at his full value by courtier, priest and peasant alike. Well they knew that but a tithe of the fat revenues which Menna collected for the king or had formerly collected for the unhappy Huy, Great High Priest of Amen. went to swell the

The Chairbearer Stakes His All 219

royal "treasuries of gold and silver" or the "treasure of the god." As yet, however, through fear of the Overseer's "eyes and ears"—spies, native and foreign—no one had dared to inform upon him at the Palace.

In spite of all Menna could do to ingratiate himself with her, the Lady Sesen ever sought to avoid him. Yet Menna never despaired. His attentions were pressed upon her, in spite of all she could do to prevent. Recently the fringed Asiatic garments of his servants, an affectation of the much-traveled Prince, were seldom absent from her sight.

Yet to-day something had happened which might bring it well within the realms of possibility that she might break with the persistent Overseer once and for all.

During the course of one of her visits to the home of Ramses' grandparents Enana had confided to her a secret which appeared to her astonished ears well-nigh incredible. For from him she learned the astounding news that Hanit, her former beloved mistress, Queen Hanit

whom she had but yesterday it seemed, seen laid to rest yonder in the Valley of the Tombs, was alive, alive!

Rendered fairly dumb at once with amazement and joy, Sesen sat at Enana's knees as if fascinated, her cheeks aglow, her eyes dancing with excitement, her lips parted as if she would drink in his every word.

This, then, was the reason of Enana's feverish restlessness of late. Queen Thi herself, whom nothing escaped, had remarked it, had even commented upon it to Sesen.

Naturally, Sesen at the time could give no adequate explanation of the unusual behavior, the ill-restrained excitement, which seemed to agitate the wizened body of the old magician. And Queen Thi finally set it down as being due to loss of favor at court.

In fact, Enana had suddenly withdrawn entirely from all court functions. A faithful adherent of the great god, Amen of Thebes, and a brother of Huy, late High Priest of Amen, Enana could not but see in Thi and Pharaoh the

murderers of Huy, his brother, and the implacable foes of Amen whom he loved and served.

So the shriveled body which Kathi had sworn was that of Hanit had been another's. Sesen recalled that Enana had often remarked the striking resemblance which existed between the ex-Queen Hanit and the Lady Meryt.

It was Meryt's body then which lay in its rock-hewn tomb back yonder swathed in yards of milk-white linens, encased in a triple cedar coffin glowing with gold and gem-incrustations! It was Meryt's body which now rested in its huge granite sarcophagus, deep beneath the crumbling Western Hills! It was Meryt's mummified form upon which she herself had placed that last sad offering, a chaplet of flowers, berries and leaves! Hanit, her beloved mistress, still lived!

Sesen could hardly follow Enana through the astounding threads of his story. She gathered that the ruse by which her mistress had been saved from certain death at Queen Thi's hands

had been Enana's own, though its successful accomplishment had been due to the faithful Kathi.

Sesen begged to be allowed to visit Hanit, but Enana restrained her. He spoke of the terrible change in the demeanor of the once gentle and studious Queen. He spoke of her vindictive hatred of Pharaoh, of Thi and, more than these perhaps, of Menna, son of Menna, whom she considered the murderer of the prince, her son.

Since her escape from the Temple all her time had been spent in study, and that with but one end in view. Vengeance upon the trio whom she had such cause to hate had become with her an obsession.

It appeared that in the realms of black art Hanit had become the equal of Enana himself. Day and night had she pored over the lector's rolls of papyrus, until each and every one of their incantations had become hers. She knew all the hidden spells of the Conjurers of Amen. She could part the waters at a word. Her

The Chairbearer Stakes His All 223

ebony wand could cause grass to grow where no vegetation had lived before. Behead a bird or animal and, at a word from Hanit, it would spring to its feet alive and whole. Even the secrets of the masons and royal architects were hers. She knew the secret blocks of stone which, touched by even the weakest hand, opened or closed many a ponderous granite door of tomb or shrine.

Yes! She would have vengeance upon Pharaoh, upon Thi, upon Menna . . .!

At the mention of Menna's name Sesen thoughtfully drew from the folds of her robe a small roll of papyrus, delicately scented and inscribed in black and red with another effusive expression of the Overseer's undying passion and his plea for a tryst. Enana read it twice, then carefully rolled it up and placed it securely beneath his leather girdle, saving as he did so:

"Here may be found the bait to lure Prince Menna to his bitter doom! It reaches Hanit's hands this very night! Verily, what said that

sage of old, Imhotep? 'Love is the greatest ally of the gods!' "

Trembling with suppressed excitement the old magician rose. He placed a caressing hand upon the head of the little Princess and departed somewhat abruptly, leaving her to marvel at the miraculous escape of her former mistress and to speculate as to the nature of Hanit's vengeance upon Menna.

And Menna? Not long after Enana had left the little Princess the overjoyed Menna felt that he could, at last, afford to ignore the reports brought in by Bar and his other spies. Menna no longer feared the existence of an understanding between Renny and the little Princess. A note from Sesen, a note most tenderly inscribed, rested at the moment between Menna's thumb and forefinger. He smiled as he placed the note to his lips. He inhaled the perfume of myrrh-paste, where Sesen's fingers had touched the smooth papyrus. Sesen the Haughty, Sesen the Unapproachable, Sesen whom the great Ramses loved, had yielded to his attentions and passion-

ate appeals. It had been a far longer siege than usually fell to the lot of the Overseer, but, at last, the usual stream of presents, poems, and entreaties had done its work. Sesen had agreed to meet him amidst the ruins near Mentuhotep's shrine!

"Mentuhotep's shrine? That forgotten ruin! An extraordinary place," mused the Prince. For a moment he doubted the missive; a hint of suspicion clouded the gleam of triumph which glowed in his eyes.

Somewhat thoughtfully he reread the note. The next he had stretched his jeweled hand toward a little bronze mirror which rested upon an ivory rack at his elbow. It was a small mirror, its handle a maiden standing with arms outstretched as if to support the disk above.

But half conscious of what he was doing, Menna gazed at his handsome features as reflected in the burnished oval of the mirror. Slowly his features relaxed. He smiled, and, laying down the mirror, clapped his hands. He gave direction to the obsequious Syrian who

immediately appeared, that Bentu, chief of his chairbearers, be sent to him immediately.

Soon after, Bentu left his master's presence, his face, wreathed in smiles, his ivory teeth flashing. Bentu walked on air, he could hardly refrain from snapping his fingers and dancing his joy like "the curly-headed ones," as he hurried down the quiet corridors. An excursion such as his master planned for the morrow customarily ended well for Bentu, chief of the carriers.

Throughout the long night following, while Menna tossed upon his ivory-footed couch, Bentu gambled away his last worldly possessions.

At first Bentu lost three heifers at a throw. Then seven sheep went to Beq, the sculptor. Quickly followed the loss of thirty geese, the two gold *uten* which encircled his wrist, his hound Antef, and finally, most prized possession of all, his bright blue scarab-seal. All passed to Beq, the sculptor.

But what cared Bentu, the Carrier! In his

The Chairbearer Stakes His All 227

master's explicit directions as to clothes for the carriers, as to food and drink, Bentu scented an assignation. The new hood was to be put on the carrying-chair. It was a beautiful hood, made of the finest linen, in stripes of green and gold. A love affair without a doubt! There was a woman in it, and women—as Bentu knew full well—women paid well for messengers and—carriers!

Bentu curled himself up in a corner of Beq's studio and went promptly to sleep. He feared to go home; his wife might ask questions, and Bentu was in mortal dread of Sebekmeryt his Nubian wife.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN MENNA, SON OF MENNA, WENT A-WOOING

THE ruined Shrine of Mentuhotep lay somewhat to the north of the great sandstone mortuary-temple of Amenhotep III.

Fronting it stood a dwarf pyramid surrounded by brightly-painted columned porticos. Far to the south stretched Queen Thi's beautiful "pleasure lake," which seemed, at this distance, a veritable bowl of gold rimmed with emeralds. The glowing walls and avenues of stately trees which marked Queen Hatshepsut's terraced temple, shut it in toward the north. High above, and seemingly ever in danger of crashing down upon it, towered the precipitous and ever crumbling masses of the purple Libyan Hills.

The way thither led along the Necropolis Route, a high-banked road which passed im-

mediately in front of the obelisks and twin statues fronting the granite threshold of Amen-hotep's stupendous mortuary-temple.

At this season of the year the wayfarer might appreciate the full height of the waters of the inundation, since their turgid reaches now swirled about the walls of the Royal Palace to the south, and lapped the high walls of Amen-hotep's mortuary temple itself, though the latter's massive walls and pylons stood well back upon the edge of that crescent-shaped strip of land whose upper reaches had been set apart by the Thebans from time immemorial, as their place of burial.

This late afternoon the waters flashed like streams of fire as the sun sank ever lower, ever more rapidly it seemed, toward the low blue line of the southern hills which sheltered Erment, city of the falcon-headed Wargod.

The arid sand-drifts, which stretched along the lower slopes of the Theban hills, seemed composed rather of snow than sand, so brilliant was the glare, so clear the atmosphere.

Most welcome to the eye were the villa-gardens of the nobles, with their deep green groves of date palm, sycamore and acacia. Many resembled little islands that seemed to float upon the flashing waters.

But neither desert glare nor flashing water could detain Prince Menna. Within the hour Atum, the evening sun, would sink below the southern hills; the cool north breeze would spring up, as was its custom.

Menna's chair-bearers had stood before his villa door an hour ahead of time. Bentu, their chief, placed his hands upon his heart and gazed heavenward, simulating the ardent lover. Another love-affair, without a doubt.

Such missions meant *uten*, necklaces or rings; a spree at Hentiu's at any rate, and Bentu loved the very sight of a bursting wine-skin!

Bentu's speculations were interrupted by the sudden appearance of the door-keeper. With a knowing wink at Bentu the latter obsequiously bowed, as Menna strode through the curtained door.

Another moment and Menna, Superintendent of the King's estates, high above the shoulders of six stalwart Nubians, was borne swiftly along the highway which led to the northern end of the curving Theban Plain.

Taking his cue from the gorgeous costume scarcely concealed beneath his master's fringed and brightly colored Syrian cloak, Bentu launched into one of Ata's love-songs. His grinning comrades punctuated each verse with a staccato "ha-ha, o-ay!"

Menna sank back against his cushions; he smiled. It pleased him that this black shadow of his had divined his mission. Nay, Menna felt himself so at peace with the world that he gave command to allow a peasant's all too-heavily laden donkey to pass unchallenged, an unheard of proceeding on the part of a Theban noble!

Bentu's hopes rose. Under such circumstances all things were possible. He might receive a jeweled necklace, golden bars; a small farm, perhaps.

Indeed, Bentu's expectations assumed so

rosy an aspect, that he broke into a dance, clapping his hands or snapping his fingers in time to his leapings and posturings, quite in the manner of the Nubians, the curly-headed people to the south.

With the sudden disappearance of the swollen sun-disk behind the deep blue hills of Erment, song and dance abruptly ceased. Menna indicated that he would descend from his chair, and all, master and men together, addressed a short prayer for the success of the Sun-god in his ceaseless conflict with Apep, Fiend of Darkness.

Piety was a habit with Menna, as with Bentu and the rest.

This done, once more Menna's chair swung along the high embankment. Once again the warning shouts or blows from the forked staff of Bentu kept the narrow way free.

Arrived before the tree-set entrance to the Temple of Thothmes, Menna left his servants and continued westward, past Amenhotep the Second's temple, on foot. Soon his tall figure

was lost among the groves of cedars, karobs and acacias with which the tomb precincts of the nobles Senmut. Ra, and Rekmara, were thickly planted.

Passing the great monument of the architect Senmut, from which vantage point the great cedar which marked the tomb precinct of his father and mother was visible, Menna turned towards the yellow terraces of Hatshepsut's ivory-columned temple. To the left, he could already distinguish the little pyramid and the terraced colonades of the Mentuhotep Shrine, near which was the spot he sought. A few minutes more and he had crossed the ruined forecourt of that ancient king's memorial shrine.

For a moment Menna looked about him. He consulted a memorandum which he took from his jeweled belt. Then again, with an anticipatory smile, he ascended to the highest terrace and suddenly vanished into a dark opening which seemed to lead into the very face of the stupendous cliffs which towered above.

Menna was soon in total darkness. He felt

himself descending a long, narrow passage-way pitched at a very steep incline. He must have gone some two hundred paces when he felt, rather than saw the glow of a light. Soon he could distinguish the polished surface of the granite slabs with which the narrow walls were faced.

All was well! The Princess awaited him!

Standing in the opening of the doorway, Menna softly spoke her name. The Princess did not answer, but stood well back within the shadows of an alabaster naos, a shrine which, centuries before, had held a statue of the deified king, Mentuhotep. At the right he saw a dark and narrow doorway in which were visible a few ascending steps cut in the rock.

The slim figure of the Princess was concealed beneath a long Memphite cloak. She appeared not to have heard his greeting.

Again Menna softly called her name: "Sesen! My Lily, My Lotus! Behold thy lover, O Daughter of Hathor!"

Still the figure was silent. Smilingly Menna

drew near; he understood. With a wealth of flattering phrases on his lips, he sought to catch her to him. As he did so, the figure turned, and revealed to his astounded gaze the burning eyes of Hanit, of Hanit the former Queen!

Yet, Hanit was dead! He had seen her embalmed body laid away in her rock-hewn tomb!

With a hoarse and inarticulate cry Menna turned and fled. 'Twas the visible *ka* of the outraged queen, 'twas Hanit's vindictive *double*! Nay, it 'twas Hanit herself, whose mummified form he himself had seen, what time Huy, the Great High Priest, had performed the last rites, with the ceremonial opening of the eyes, the ears, the mouth! Had not he himself placed a wreath upon her well-swathed form, and thereafter seen the coffin lowered in her rock-hewn tomb?

As Menna stumbled up the steep incline of the rock-hewn passage, black horror seized upon him; a paralyzing terror rose from his throbbing heart and mounted to his numbed brain. He tore the heavy gold chains and the

jeweled *wesekh* from his throat. He felt that he was choking.

“Breath of Ra! The doorway, air, light, the blessed daylight!”

As Menna groped his way up the passage he heard in front of him, a dull thud as of some heavy falling body. For a moment his headlong flight was arrested. The solid rock beneath his feet seemed to tremble. He rushed up the last few yards of the narrow corridor and came suddenly in violent contact with an immovable block of polished granite.

A cold perspiration burst out upon his forehead; his knees trembled beneath him. He was trapped.

The overseer made a last attempt to think clearly. For a few moments he succeeded in stifling the terror that gripped his heart.

Menna carefully felt the walls over and over again to left, to right, in front! Not a crack nor a crevice. Always that granite door! In an agony of fear Menna hurled himself against it. He shrieked, he raved, he cursed.

Finally the Overseer, no longer human, turned and crept back along the granite passage-way. The dust of centuries rose into his throat and filled his lungs. Its fine, impalpable particles got into his eyes. The droppings of innumerable bats covered his robes; his scented wig had fallen from his head.

Slowly Menna scrambled down the passage, now in a crouching position, now on all fours. His blood-red eyes gleamed in the gloomy obscurity like those of a savage panther of the south. Blood trickled slowly from his inflamed nostrils; his lips were drawn far back upon the gums, as if he snarled.

Menna stood again in the shrine-chamber. The light still flickered along its granite sides, upon the ivory-toned naos and the figures and hieroglyphs with which it was decorated. The prince gazed wildly about him. Even the ponderous inner door had now swung into place.

Stretching out his bleeding hands he approached the huge shrine. He would cast himself upon the mercy of Hanit's vengeful spirit,

for by now Menna was long past fear of *bas* or *kas*, of “*ghosts*” or “*doubles!*” He called her name as, with outstretched hands he shuffled hesitatingly towards the shrine.

Hanit had vanished!

With a low moan Menna crumpled up and pitched headlong at the foot of the shrine. Above his head the light brightened for an instant, then slowly sank and, suddenly, vanished. Once again the painted forms of gods and demons alone reigned supreme amidst the fetid heat and darkness.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HITTITES ADVANCE

PHARAOH'S recently completed City of the Sun stretched at some length along both sides of the Nile, about sixty miles north of the ancient city of Siut, sacred to the Wolf-god.

To-day, fronting its white quay, a fleet of barges swung idly at anchor. From the high poop of one, a large temple-barge by its decoration, Merira, High Priest of Aton, was about to disembark. At the landward end of its gang-plank, which had been stretched to the well-built limestone wall of the quay, a knot of white-robed priests of Aton bowed a fawning welcome to their portly brother hierophant. Sixteen stalwart lay-brothers stood expectantly beside the dignitary's hooded-chair. Soon, Merira, High Priest of Aton, high above the gleaming

heads of his chanting followers, vanished down the avenue of criosphinxes which led toward the massive pylons of the imposing Aton Temple.

Parallel with the well-planted gardens and vineyards of the Temple of the Sun ran the northern wall of Pharaoh's new palace. The southern wall divided it from the gardens which hedged in the home of the General Mei, a favorite of Pharaoh. Both the grounds about the Aton Temple, the palace, villa, and library of Pharaoh and the house of Mei, ran backward from the Nile bank to the first rise of the low hills to the east.

Pharaoh's gardens, both of villa, library and palace, were already thickly planted with the rarest of native trees and vines, but myrrh, sandalwood, dô-m-palm and young Lebanus cedar from the terraces, might be seen both in the gardens of the monarch and in those of his favorites.

At this moment the huge limestone palace glowed in the heat of midafternoon like a piece of painted ivory. The sun's rays turned to fire

the gold caps of the lofty cedar flag-posts which towered above the walls.

At the end of a long avenue of young acacias one could distinguish the archers-of-the-guard, as they paced to and fro before the palace gates. A pair of Syrian horses, harnessed to a light chariot, pawed the sandstone flagging before the entrance-pylon, or reared high in air, did the iron-wristed *katana* show the least sign of relaxing his grip upon the gilded reins.

Queen Noferith was about to visit the hillset tomb of one of her daughters, who had died shortly after the royal family had taken up its residence in the new city. The royal-nurse, Thuya, and the three sisters of the dead Princess, were already well on their way to the tomb, bearing offerings of food, flowers and cosmetics for the use of the *ka*.

Within the interior of the palace, Pharaoh was busily engaged with that corpulent official, the chief-scribe, Enei. At the moment Enei was squatting cross-legged among the reeds and water-fowl painted upon the stucco floor of

the room. Upon his kilted knees lay the open sheet of a long leather-roll already closely written in red and black with lines of deftly inscribed hieratic.

Enei held a long reed pen in one hand; two others stuck out behind his elephantine ears. He had been occupied all morning transcribing from Pharaoh's own lips the "Hymn to Aton," which for weeks had engrossed his fanatical master.

Famine and pestilence at home, revolt in Nubia, new mutterings of trouble along the Asiatic frontier, one and all had to give place now to the completion of this Sun-hymn, and the ritual of the Aton cult.

The ritual had already been chanted in the Temple of the Sun. Indeed, it had been intoned for the first time in a little chapel erected among the now well-nigh deserted temples of Amen at Karnak. Here was bitter hearing for the exiled priest of Amen!

Pharaoh was extremely anxious to hear the High Priest Merira chant his "Hymn to the Sun," a composition which Pharaoh had writ-

ten for the express use of the Priests of the Temple of Aton. In order to finish the hymn Pharaoh had shut himself up in his library with orders that on no account should he be disturbed. Ambassadors, envoys, nobles of the empire, spies and messengers, all must wait who sought an audience of the engrossed monarch.

But a few moments before, Pentu, Chief Court Physician, had backed from his master's presence, loaded down with chains and bracelets of gold.

Pentu had gained some real or fancied ascendancy over Enei the Scribe in a heated argument as to a probable connection between the sun-god Ra of Heliopolis, Aton, and Adon, the Syrian God of Fertility. Pentu's bald head glistened like the mirror clasped in the hand of his waiting daughter. Pentu's broad smile widened, if indeed that might be, as his waiting servants hurled themselves into the dust at sight of his gleaming decorations, those "gifts which the king bestows."

"What stiff campaign hath earned such rich

rewards?" asks the travel-worn Rabba, messenger of Ribaddi, one of Egypt's vassals in Asia.

"Peace, peace, soldier! Hold thy tongue, fit but to frighten lousy Sand-dwellers! Hast thou not heard? Egypt hath done with war! Corn grows upon our spearshafts, boys swim in our shields; our curved swords cut wheat and spelt, our slings kill reed-birds. The 'gifts of Majesty' now reach priests, poets and potters. Breath of Ra—ahem—Aton, I should have said, a soldier now must stand aside that shaven-headed sucklings from the new religious school may pass! Amemet seize me! Five hours' waiting is enough for me! Honors to thy son's son," and the officer passes out.

Some three hours later, Ribbadi's urgent call for assistance, that small clay tablet upon whose safe and speedy deliverance into the hands of the Egyptian king hung the fate of Syria, Ribaddi's last despairing cry for help, still rested in its metal tube about the impatient Rabba's neck.

Tired of his long vigil, Rabba had addressed

a few somewhat pointed remarks in the direction of the painted ceiling, but intended for the large ears of Senab the Court Usher. As a not unnatural sequel, another moment found him on the wrong side of the palace door.

From the threshold of the court-yard two giggling pages made the infuriated Rabba mock bows and salutations in the Syrian manner.

Thereafter, Rabba wandered aimlessly about and finally disappeared behind the deep red curtains which blew in and out of Thethi's tavern-door.

The following morning, Rabba awoke to find himself seated upon the edge of a wine-stained couch. In one hand he clasped a faded spray of mimosa. He pulled a chaplet of dried and blackened lotus-flowers from his aching head. Not a bar remained about his arms, not a strand of beads flashed upon his massive chest. Neith, a full-lipped Theban dancer, had them all!

Rabba's hand went to his throat hesitatingly, despairingly. The case that had held his

master's message, his credentials and his master's seal, all had vanished with that velvet-eyed traitress.

Ten days ago should the precious letter have been added to the thousands of clay tablets which lined the alcoves of Pharaoh's library and registry. Ten days ago, Rabba the Messenger should have been well on his way back to Gebal, his hillset station, with Pharaoh's reply.

Alas! At the moment, Ribaddi's devoted city lay a mass of smouldering ruins, in the midst of which were scattered the ashes of Ribaddi, Pharaoh's most loyal vassal, his family, and those of the entire squadron of Baal, to which the unhappy Rabba himself belonged. Feeling that the Egyptian monarch had lulled himself into a sense of security, the hosts of the Khabiri and Hittites, headed by Rimur of Charchemish and the kings of Kadesh and Megiddo, had suddenly swooped upon the territory of Pharaoh's Syrian vassal, Ribaddi the Loyal.

CHAPTER XX

HOW BAR AND RENNY MEET FOR THE LAST TIME

REFLECTED in the quiet reaches of the Nile, a brilliant planet hung, like a silver ball, in the green and gold of Egypt's long-continued afterglow. Below it Aah, the pale young moon, seemed as if it sought to catch that scintillating jewel in the hollow of its crescent cup.

The evening's stillness was broken at intervals by the snarls of marauding hyenas, the barks of jackals and the hooting of the little golden-brown owls which haunted the overhanging eaves of the massive Temple of Khonsu.

Dusky forms stole stealthily along the narrow alleys of the half-deserted city of Thebes. As they hurried past, the paling afterglow reflected upon the low white walls caused their

nodding shadows to appear unnaturally enlarged, menacing, terrifying.

Within Renny's workshop the more immediate shadows were at times revealed by the light from a deep bronze bowl, a brazier filled with glowing incense-wood. The bowl stood upon a low stand immediately in front of Renny's statue of the Princess Sesen.

Once again relieved of its encircling ropes and mattings, the beautiful statue of the Princess stood revealed in all its grace and freedom. Following Menna's sudden and mysterious disappearance Renny had come again to his workshop to claim the statue which was his. The little crocodile amulet at his throat had, indeed, saved him from Bar's murderous attack. Bar himself felt this to be a fact.

In the center of the room stood the Princess herself. Her gaze was fixed upon the statue with a mingled expression of awe, pride and delight. At her feet knelt Renny the sculptor, his upturned face transfigured.

Bhanar, trembling with fear, frequently

Last Meeting of Bar and Renny 249

opened the door and gazed anxiously, impatiently it seemed, down the length of the garden path. As she slipped to the lock the broken seals tapped softly against the wooden panels.

Why so impatient, Bhanar? Why that gleam of hatred in those eyes, ever so gentle, ever so beautiful, as they rest upon the figure of thy mistress?

To account for Bhanar's attitude, we must revert once more to Bar, servant to Menna. All unwitting of his master's horrible fate, Bar had set spies about the Princess. He engaged a servant attached to the villa to report day by day the doings of the little Princess, hoping to surprise her in some unguarded evidence of affection for the infatuated Renny. He himself sought and gained the confidence of the jealous Bhanar.

The beautiful slave-girl, now envenomed by a sudden jealousy of her mistress, confided to the sympathetic Bar a note which Renny had bribed Baquit, the Gate-Keeper, to deliver to the Princess. Bhanar, after many a vain at-

tempt, had managed to abstract it from her mistress's ebony jewel-box.

In return for this, the overjoyed Bar had promised her that this very night should see Sesen and Renny parted forever.

Thus it happened, that when, towards sundown, Sesen commanded Bhanar to get her long Memphite cloak for an outing in the gardens, Bhanar trembled with anticipation. She barely glanced at the ducks, the gazelle's hearts, the Delta wine and the lotus-seed bread, which composed the evening meal. The meal being over and the low tabourets removed, Prince Wozer, Sesen's father, was carried off upon the shoulders of six chair-bearers in the direction of the Theban cemetery. It was the anniversary of the death of a life-long friend and, as had been his habit, he himself would light the first torch preparatory to the service held in the dead man's honor, he with his own hands would place the gifts of food and drink upon the offering-table of the dead noble's tomb. For the last five years Prince Wozer had thus acted the part of *ka*-servant to Surera the Justified.

Last Meeting of Bar and Renny 251

When once the long procession of offering-bearers which regularly accompanied her father on such occasions was well on its way, Sesen and Bhanar descended into the palace gardens.

Arrived at a little postern gate which connected with the villa-garden of Thi's favorite, the unhappy Menna, the Princess pushed back the barlock, and both passed through. Another moment and they had entered the dimly-lit room of Renny's former workshop.

All unsuspecting of Bhanar's treachery, Sesen had placed the little slave at the door to watch. Bhanar's heart beat so violently that it well-nigh suffocated her. A glimpse of her mistress reaching out her fingers toward the statue, her mistress' other self, struck suddenly a tardy repentance into the very soul of the despairing slave-girl.

Suddenly Bhanar started. Three figures had turned into the narrow garden-path and were rapidly approaching. In the foremost of the three Bhanar recognized Bar the Memphite. Menna's former spy was speaking in loud tones

and violently gesticulating as he hurried the others up the path. Two archers of Prince Wozer's guard strode behind him.

Forgetful of herself, her jealousy and treachery, Bhanar shrieked aloud; "Renny! My Renny! Bar is here, Menna's spy! Fly, while there is yet time!"

At her first words, Renny leaped to the door. A glance showed him his old enemy. Who could have betrayed them?

Hardly knowing what he would do, he drew the Princess down behind the festooned pedestal, covering her at the same time with its heavy wreaths and flowers.

Even as he paused, rapidly scanning the effect, the outer door was burst violently open and the giant Bar pushed headlong into the room.

In the doorway, looming large against the afterglow, Renny beheld the sturdy forms of the two archers.

Bar shot a hasty glance at the statue, then ripped out an oath: "Dog, son of a dog, the Princess. Where is she?"

Last Meeting of Bar and Renny 253

With a smile upon his pale face, Renny slowly raised his hand and pointed to the statue. Then suddenly as Bar turned, he sprang straight at the Memphite and struck, alas, in vain, for his dagger broke short off against Bar's hidden leather corslet.

Realizing that his last moment had come, Renny slowly drew his long Asiatic sleeve across his bowed head. Motionless, he anticipated the arrow that trembled between the thumb and forefinger of one of the guardsmen who, at his sudden attack upon the Memphite, had moved up into the room.

The twang of the bow thrummed in his ears, and, with it, a choking sob and the thud of a falling body.

Quickly Renny threw aside the light covering from his face, dreading what his trembling heart too truly warned him he should see. With a cry of agony he dropped beside the limp body of the dead Bhanar. Gently he lifted her head, scanned her face, breathed her name. In vain! Too well had Wenamon's arrow done its work!

A few red feathers and an inch of reed showed just above the white robe of his little countrywoman. The rest of the long shaft was buried in her breast.

Renny rose slowly to his feet. His gaze swept the terrified archers to the threshold of the door. With a roar like that of some southern panther maddened with its wounds, once more he hurled himself upon the treacherous Bar.

His onslaught hurled the dagger from the nerveless hand of the horror-struck Memphite. For that worthy stood gazing, as if fascinated, at the upturned face of the dead Bhanar.

They grappled, tripped and fell, rolling over and over, now one seeming to gain the mastery, now the other. Above their writhing forms the archers awaited their opportunity.

Kneeling at the base of the pedestal the terrified little Princess alone made outcry, sending out upon the still evening air shriek upon shriek, intermingled with peals of frenzied laughter.

Last Meeting of Bar and Renny 255

A slight lessening of the grip and Renny's powerful hand stole towards Bar's jeweled throat. A snap, a quiver of the big limbs and the Memphite lay motionless.

Renny staggered like a drunken man to his feet. Stealthily Wenamon the archer approached, with somewhat of the caution with which one might beard a wounded lion in its den. His bow had been cast aside. A dagger gleamed in his raised hand.

Renny's swaying figure lurched heavily towards the statue of the Princess, to the base of which the Princess herself still clung. As his fingers gripped its flower-festooned base, Wenamon's dagger flashed.

Renny suddenly straightened himself. His bloodshot eyes sought those of the Princess, who stood rooted to the spot.

"Sesen! Sesen," he cried, and fell dead at her feet.

CHAPTER XXI

OF THE CAPTURE OF BELUR, THE HITTITE

THE city of Kadesh lay gleaming in the evening sunlight at the upper end of that vast plain which stretched northward to the Lake Country. As viewed from Shabtuna, where the Egyptian army was now encamped, it seemed a veritable city of towers.

Along the eastern front of this Asiatic city the waters of the Orontes glittered like a straight Hittite sword. The high, machicolated gate-towers, on the eastern side, were approached by a causeway and a broad flight of stone steps. Protected by a white wall on either side, these steps rose from the very waters of the turgid Orontes itself.

The city towers were black with people, frenzied women for the most part. Their piercing shrieks, now of exultation, now of despair, floated out upon the flashing waters of the broad

river. The sounds reached the ears of Ramses, the Egyptian general, where he stood.

Along the city walls youths and old men peered anxiously southward, across the level plain. Men, women and children stood with faces glued to the openings which capped the city walls.

The eyes of the people of Kadesh were riveted upon the ebb and flow of a gigantic conflict, which had raged throughout the day back and forth across the broad reaches of the plain below.

The mighty hosts of the Hittites, led by Rimur of Charchemish in person, had struggled since daybreak with the forces of Egypt.

The battle had opened auspiciously for the Hittites, though the ninth of Khoiak was a favorable day alike to Egyptian and Hittite. To the Egyptians it meant that the very gods would lend their aid in the conflict, for was not this the day in which the god Thoth gained his memorable victory over Set!

Yet, so far, matters had gone badly for the

Egyptians. The Division of Sutekh, led by old Noferhotep, had been surprised at the ford near Shabtuna, and cut to pieces. Noferhotep himself had been drowned in the blood-red waters and his body had not been recovered.

Alas, O Noferhotep, the harpers will not sing before thy silent form; "the feathered dancers" will not join thy funeral dance!

It appeared that the spies sent out by the Egyptians had been deceived as to the numerical superiority of the Hittite host. An unknown force of the enemy had been enabled to steal up on Noferhotep's infantry as it crossed the ford.

A few wounded stragglers from this unequal action had managed to reach the main Egyptian camp, where their distorted accounts of the recent disaster well-nigh caused a panic. However, at this juncture the arrival of Yankhamu with a division of Ethiopian troops, had put new heart into the Egyptian host.

Thus, then, it had been since daybreak. The tide of battle had leaned now toward the Hittite, now toward Egypt.

The main affray had resolved itself into a frontal attack, which extended right across the plain to the very foothills.

The Egyptian chariots had endeavored to cut around the right flank of the enemy, hoping to drive them into a swamp which lay to the southwest.

Across the broad plains serried ranks of infantry pressed to the attack. The reserves of both armies were now brought into action. Thus commenced the final stage of the conflict, a last desperate onslaught which should, once and for all, decide the fate of one of the two opposing armies.

The non-combatants high upon the battle-mented walls of Kadesh broke into wild shouts of triumph, as the right wing of the Egyptian army was seen to bend, to break and, finally, to rush, in wildest disorder, towards a slight curve in the Orontes river eastward. A mass of the howling sons of Kheta pressed hard upon its heels.

The people of the city could contain them-

selves no longer. For them the battle was as good as won. The youths flew down to the great gates which opened as if by magic, and in another moment hot-footed youth, halting old-age, women and little children could be seen spreading in a fan-shaped wave across the dusty expanse which separated the contending forces from the city walls.

Suddenly, from behind a low ridge to the westward, there appeared a long line of two-horse chariots. In the center, easily recognized by his bright red leather doublet and gilded war-bonnet, stood the young Egyptian general, Ramses. A huge Ethiopian *katana*, leaning well out over the leather body of the chariot, urged on Ramses' horses by word of mouth and lash of whip. At the right of the chariot bounded a lean Nubian panther.

The onrushing chariots aligned themselves upon that of their young and impetuous leader. With ever quickening pace the long line swept across the well-nigh deserted right flank, turned, and hurled a devastating avalanche of

arrows into the wavering center of the enemy's line.

Without pausing an instant the gleaming line crashed into the very heart of the Hittite army. Thereafter Charchemish, Kadesh, Megiddo, On, Thebes and Napata, were mingled in an indescribable whirl of choking yellow dust, rearing and screaming horses, yelling and cursing men, and flashing weapons.

The right flank of the Egyptian army, which had fainted at retreat, now turned upon its pursuers. Many they hurled into the river; many they slew out of hand. The majority, panic-stricken, took to flight in the direction of the city.

Scenting disaster, Rimur, King of Charchemish, fled headlong from the stricken field. The King of Kadesh hurled his wounded companion, Belur the Hittite, from his chariot, and urged his tired horses toward the southern gate.

Seeing their King take to flight, the forces of Kadesh broke. One and all followed their royal

master as fast as chariot, horse or limbs could carry them.

In a moment the fleeing soldiers had burst into the densely-massed body composed of their distracted wives, mothers, grandsires and wailing children. These likewise attempted now to turn and again to seek shelter within the city walls.

There ensued a state of indescribable confusion in which terror reigned supreme. And this state of utter panic was not confined to those unfortunates upon the plain, but communicated itself to the few people who still remained within the city. Fearing the fury of the Egyptian soldiers, these now shut and barred the ponderous city gates.

There followed such a slaughter of the miserable sons of Kheta as had not been witnessed in the Orontes Valley since the day Great Thothmes had first taken Kadesh by assault.

Fifteen full days was Pahura the Scribe occupied in listing the spoils of gilded chariots, jeweled breast-plates, gold and silver temple-

vessels, and the treasure of Belil, King of Kadesh.

As to Belil himself, his obese form was ignominiously pierced by an arrow, as he dangled at the end of a rope half-way up the city walls.

Once the Ethiopian division had burst in the city gate, those who had attempted to save their King, and others who had been driven to the battlements surrounding the palace, were hurled over its parapet and met their death either upon the flagging of the court or in the waters of the moat which surround it.

Rimur, King of Charchemish, fled night and day by means of relays. Not a night did he rest until he found himself once again behind the giant walls of his capital.

Belur, his brother, badly wounded on the field, was brought, a pale and sullen captive, to the chariot of the victorious Ramses. At the present plight of the once haughty ambassador to Egypt Ramses allowed the faintest indication of a sneer to break the stony indifference of his glance.

Following his commands the Prince of Kheta was led away that his wounds might be attended to. Belur was reserved for a fate far worse than death. Indeed, death would come as a welcome relief to the indignities and tortures that would presently be meted out to him. He was destined to swing from the prow of Ramses' galley head down, where he would be lightly fed, yet, were it possible, not allowed to die, until Pharaoh himself should despatch him.

According to custom, a captive chief must be presented to the great god Amen of Thebes. Established precedent required that he be killed before the temple portals of the god himself. Whether Aton would scorn such a blood-thirsty offering, Ramses did not pause to think.

The irruption of the victorious Egyptian army into Kadesh was followed by wholesale loot, division of the women among the soldiery, riotous drunkenness, child-murder and the apportioning of the manhood of the vanquished among the temples of Egypt. There followed the utter obliteration of the conquered city in a holocaust of fire.

Within twenty days from the time Pahura had commenced to list the first golden ewer, the once famous city of Kadesh with its gilded towers and blue-glazed walls, its palace ablaze with lazuli, silver and ivory, and the great temple to the Sun-god, a veritable treasure-house of richly colored tiles and bricks, gold, turquoise, silver, ebony, Lebanon cedar and sweet-smelling woods from the Incense Country, lay a mass of smouldering ruins, encircled during the day by a veritable ring of vultures, throughout the night by droves of snarling and quarreling hyenas.

But, by this time, the victorious host of Egypt was well on its way up the straight highroad to the frontier, where it was hailed by the acclaiming vanguard of the overjoyed Egyptian populace.

At the first Egyptian city, Suan-of-the-North, it was rumored that the aged Magician Enana, Ramses' grandsire, together with two unknown and mysterious personages, had been seen to enter Ramses' tent. Thereafter they accompanied him.

CHAPTER XXII

THE "DOUBLE" OF HANIT

A FEELING, closely akin to panic, had settled upon the Egyptian Court. Its members, of whom by far the greater number were, outwardly at least, firm adherents of Aton, had now received a second violent shock to their already perplexed minds.

Following her safe return from one of her periodic visits to Pharaoh's new capital to the north, Thi the Queen-Mother, had suddenly and most mysteriously vanished.

The Women's Quarter of the palace was in an uproar. Consternation and, withal a nameless dread, was stamped upon the faces of courtier and servant alike. The remembrance of Menna's unaccountable, and still unsolved disappearance, was still fresh in their minds.

Upon the evening in which the Queen-Mother

had so suddenly vanished, the Princess Bekitaton had left her side for a few moments in order to warm, with her own hands, a cup of old Thinite wine. When the little Princess returned it was to find the Queen-Mother gone.

She chanced to look out of the window and was astonished to see Queen Thi, in company with another lady of the court, the Lady Renenet she thought, about to round the bend of the road which led to the Temple of Sekhmet. It was the first time in her experience that the Queen-Mother had gone out so little attended.

Bekitaton returned to the harem. She did not suspect that anything was amiss until darkness descended upon the palace. Then and not until then, according to the rigid court etiquette, she again entered the Queen-Mother's room—upon this occasion accompanied by the other ladies-in-waiting—in order to assist the Queen-Mother to the Banquet Hall. Among the ladies she was surprised to see the Lady Renenet. Upon inquiry she found that Renenet

had not left the Women's Quarters that day. And it was the same with respect to the other ladies. Not one had left the Palace walls during the entire day.

Yet, one lady asserted that she had seen Queen Thi enter the palace within the hour. Somewhat relieved by this, the Princess Bekitaton sought the Queen-Mother in each and every room of the Women's Quarter. Yet this search, similarly, proved unsuccessful.

Once again she entered the Queen's robing-room. She found no sign of disorder. Queen Thi had apparently left of her own free will. The mystified little Princess called to her assistance Queen Noferit and other ladies of the harem.

Again the rooms were searched. Led by the Princess the searchers descended into the gardens. They entered the quarters of the cooks and butlers. They explored the dark shadows of the various columned courts and the murkier gloom of the side aisles, together with their innumerable storerooms.

Finally, when panic seized upon them, they called to their assistance the Steward of the Palace. At the news Soken's changed expression did little to allay their fears. With a gesture he swept them all back in the direction of the harem.

In turn the Palace Steward and the other eunuchs once again carefully searched palace, court, garden and lakeside. Darkness descended upon a house filled with grief and consternation on the part of the women, and deadly fear on the part of Soken and the other eunuchs of the palace.

The fate of Prince Menna, Pharaoh's Overseer, was still upon the lips of palace-servant, priest and peasant alike. Menna's enemies were many. It might well be that someone whom Menna had misused or wronged had at last struck back and that successfully.

But the sudden disappearance of the Queen-Mother from the midst of her ladies, from a mighty building guarded within and without, caused a thrill of horror and a nameless fear to

run through palace and countryside alike. It was inexplicable.

The Temple of Sekhmet, the lake, the palace and the palace-gardens, were searched and re-searched again and again. Not a spot was overlooked. When at last it became necessary to send the evil tidings to the new capital, the City of the Sun, Pharaoh himself came hurriedly back to Thebes.

As, day after day, the searching parties returned empty-handed, Pharaoh lost patience. Hundreds were slain. Soken and many of the palace eunuchs met their death at the strangler's hands. Men soon went to the task of searching for the lost Queen as criminals already condemned to death.

For a full week the search was renewed. Fresh men were called up for the task. Finally, the soldiers of the Divisions of Khonsu, Ptah and Sutekh were pressed into service. All in vain.

One remarkable circumstance was discovered, following the disappearance of the Queen-

Mother, and that by the Princess Bekitaton. The portrait of the Ex-Queen Hanit, which had been painted on a column in the Audience Hall of the late Pharaoh, had been carefully and completely obliterated. This had been done just prior to or immediately following the Queen-Mother's disappearance. Nothing remained, where once the portrait stood, but six words written in red in roughly drawn hieratic: "By the Power of the Book of Thoth."

No one could explain this desecration of the former Queen's portrait. Mention of the magic Book of Thoth struck terror into every heart, not excepting that of Pharaoh himself.

Thenceforth Pharaoh's fanatical zeal in the interest of Aton, his Syrian sun-cult, slowly waned and finally ceased. The innumerable gifts to the many new Aton shrines throughout Egypt—one had been set up against the very walls of the Temple of Amen in the Apt—the gorgeous religious processions, the ceaseless theological studies and debates, all were suddenly abandoned.

With the change Pharaoh himself seemed to fade. Little nourishment passed his lips. Within the dim shadows of his private chapel, hour after hour the hollow-eyed monarch stood in prayer before the gold and gem-encrusted statue of Aton, the sun-god. At times the statue appeared to his distracted mind to mock him with a smile half-pitying, half-contemptuous!

Verily, the curse of Huy, High Priest of Amen was upon him! Noferith, his wife, had borne him no heir, no son to follow him upon the gold Horus Throne of Egypt! The scepter must go to others, to that hollow cousin of his, whom Thi had been wont to call *the mirage*.

As for old Ay, another distant relative and possible claimant to the Throne, Pharaoh suspected that Ay was even now in secret correspondence with the exiled priests of Amen, whose influence was again making itself felt, not alone in Thebes, but as far north as the new capital, the City of the Sun itself.

To whom then could he turn? Among the courtiers about him there was not one in whom

he could trust. Not one could help him. Alas, too late, he bethought him of the exiled Ramses!

In the midst of a rising on the part of his famine-stricken people in the south, an insurrection started by the exiled priests of Amen, Pharaoh took to his ivory couch.

Thereafter few saw him. He held no more audiences. Dedu, Keeper of the Robes, alone attended him. Even Pentu, his physician, was dismissed and shortly after strangled, together with Mei, Chief of the Military Forces in the new capital. Mei and Pentu had both been found in secret correspondence with the priests of Amen in distant Nubia.

Dedu, Keeper of the Robes, entered his royal master's apartment late one morning to find him sitting bolt upright, his prominent eyes fixed in a horrified stare upon the curtain which screened the door. A single word fell from Pharaoh's trembling lips as he sank back fainting in Dedu's outstretched arms. That single word the wondering Dedu swore was . . . *Hanit!*

Thereafter, Pharaoh in terror bade his

guards drive all visitors, petitioners and beggars from the palace gates. Pharaoh shut himself up within its brightly painted courts and allowed things without to take their course.

The silver-embossed doors remained fast closed. No watchman paced the battlemented walls and pylons. No plumed Syrian horses pawed the flagging before the outer gates. The gay bannerettes no longer rose upon the gold-tipped poles fronting the main entrance to the palace forecourt. Hushed were the voices of the guards and other palace servants. Even the birds which flitted back and forth among the trees seemed to have forgotten their cheerful songs.

Finally, one memorable evening, when the dying Pharaoh lay propped up high upon his couch, he beckoned to Prince Antef, Lord of Thebes, who stood in the center of the awe-struck group before him.

Dropping the hairless lids of a pair of vulture-like eyes, eyes filled at the moment with a joy which the Prince tried in vain to conceal,

Antef fell upon his knees beside the dying Pharaoh's couch. He already felt the gold diadem of kings about his wig, the royal asps about his forehead.

Silence descended upon the little room. Silence seemed to fall upon the entire building, both within and without. The wails of the women ceased, the chanting of the priests and the sobs and cries of the palace servants, all abruptly stopped.

So long continued was the sudden hush that the expectant Antef slowly raised his head.

As his questioning eyes met those of his royal master, Antef there beheld such a look of terror, a look reflected he saw upon the faces of the nobles behind the dying monarch, that the astounded Theban himself felt somewhat of the chill that seemed to have changed his master and his friends to stone.

He caught the whispered sound of a once familiar name. It seemed to be on everyone's lips: Hanit! Hanit! Hanit!

Antef turned himself about. At once that

same nameless terror held him also in its grip.

In the doorway stood Queen Hanit, Hanit upon whose mummified form he himself had placed a wreath of flowers! Antef stumbled to his feet and there remained, his eyes fixed upon this apparition of the Ex-Queen, as if he likewise had been turned to stone.

A richly plaited robe covered Queen Hanit's form. About her head was set the vulture diadem, that circlet of gold which queens of the royal blood alone may wear. Her throat was hidden by a necklace of bright blue beads. Upon one finger she wore a blue glazed ring, a ring such as is worn by the dead alone? Before her she held a Book which seemed to glow, as if by some preternatural light.

By now Antef and the horrified nobles had backed to the furthest corner of the room, whence they continued to gaze at this apparition of the former Queen, believing it to be in very fact the visible "double" of Thi's murdered rival.

Hanit's black eyes glittered like those of

some poisonous snake. She fixed them threateningly upon the shrunken features of the terrified monarch:

"Dost know me, son of Thi?"

The trembling monarch tried in vain to speak.

"Dost know me, Syrian?"

Again Pharaoh essayed to find his nerveless tongue. At last, in a hoarse and breathless whisper, he managed to articulate the one word . . . Hanit!

Again the soft and unearthly voice of Hanit thrilled their ears:

"Son of Thi, thou that art about to wander forth upon the steep and stony hills of Duat, hearken unto the utterance of Amen, king of gods! By the power of this Magic Book, thy Hidden Names are revealed to me! Known to me are the Mystic Names of the Genii that protect thee! By the Power of the Book, thy *ka* hath been destroyed! Thy soul is destroyed!

"Awake, awake! Pass not forth until I have shown thee a marvel, saith Amen, king of gods!

Stand forth, Son of Amen! Receive the Scepter of Amen which is thine!"

With this the apparition slowly moved back, and there before them, arrayed in the full regalia of kings, the curved sword of Amen clasped in his hand, stood Ramses, the conqueror of Rimur and the Hittites.

The seeming "double" of the dead Queen raised the Luminous Book high above her head:

"Hearken, Egyptians! Hearken to the words of Amen, king of gods! With this sword divine hath Ramses, my son, hurled back the Hittites from your borders! With this sword divine hath he won a glorious victory! Rimur grovels in the dust before him; Belur awaits his bitter doom! Of a truth is this my son, born of my will, essence of my essence, saith Amen, king of gods! Salute your king! Salute him, Electrum of Kings, Essence of a God!"

She ceased, and vanished as abruptly as she had appeared. In her place stood a figure arrayed in the regalia of the great god Amen. In his hand he held the Double Crown of Egypt.

As if overcome at this manifestation of the power of the great God Amen, Mei-amen, new leader of the Prophets of Amen, slowly and reverently advanced and, falling at Ramses' knees, kissed the hem of his garment. As he rose, few noted the look that passed between them.

Thereafter, the dead Pharaoh was forgotten. Indeed, as the cries of the palace-women broke out once more, the assembled nobles burst into a shout, new to those resplendent walls, a shout which brought the terrified servants to the door:

"Hail to thee, Ramses, chosen of Amen! Life, Satisfaction and Health to Pharaoh, our lord, forever and ever!"

* * * * *

"Let me see, how do the Egyptians express it? O, I remember! Now of the coming to the throne of Ramses, of his marriage to the Princess Sesen, of the cutting out of the hated name of Aton from temple, tomb and dwelling, is it not written in letters of red and black upon a

leather scroll and stored within the Temple of Amen in the Apt unto this day?

“You know this to be true, Clem! But do you know that Seneb, the mason, was sent to cut out all mention of Menna upon the walls of his tomb? Menna, son of Menna, never reached the Blessed Fields of Aaru, of that you may be sure.

“Yes, I know what your next question will be! The Luminous Book?

“Listen! What I am going to tell you is interesting and true. I can vouch for the story, as I had it from the lips of Enana himself.

“Enana placed the Magic Book in a cauldron of boiling water drawn from the Sacred Lake by a virgin of the Temple of the Mother-goddess. Thus the mystic powers with which the Book had been imbued became incorporated in the holy water.

“A draught of this enchanted water Queen Hanit drank and, drinking, died. The remainder, according to her wish, was sprinkled over her body, immediately following the placing of her mummy in the tomb.

"Thereafter Enana 'said that which he said,' Enana 'intoned that which he intoned,' and the immutable curse of the Conjurers of Amen was repeated before the door of her tomb:

"Behold! As Ra, the Sun-god, liveth! Whosoever seeketh to desecrate this tomb dieth! Whosoever toucheth this body to remove it dieth! On earth death is his portion! In the underworld annihilation is his destiny! In the Hidden Name of Amen, king of gods, this curse remaineth, yea, so long as Ra, the Sun-god, endureth!"

"You see, Clem! It is not to be wondered at that those men died so suddenly, or that the curator, who likewise handled mummy No. 49, himself succumbed. It proves, without the shadow of a doubt, that the curse of the Conjurers of Amen *did* endure. Sesen can tell you. . . ."

"Steven, please lie down and stop talking. Don't worry about things. Try to compose yourself."

As I sank dutifully back upon the pillows, I was aware of a soft and deliciously cool hand

which gently pressed my throbbing head. A smiling face bent over me.

My bewildered eyes wandered from a trim little white cap to a spotless white dress and shoes, white canvas shoes!

"Where are her pretty gilded sandals," thought I.

I tried to speak to her. I even made an effort to catch the soothing hand at my forehead.

At this the white figure vanished, and in its place, stood Braintree, the Seaforth's doctor.

"Great Scott, I have it. I am in the hospital! That was Susan. . . ."

"That's just where you are, Steven. And I must ask you not to excite yourself about it. Here you are and here you have been for some time. Tribe, Dunn and I have slaved over you and won out, at last.

"But who, may I ask, is Menna? No friend of yours, I'd swear! Susan is equally interested in some lady friend of your acquaintance, Sesen I think her name was! Well, never mind that now. Turn over and rest."

Then it was a dream; the vision of a fevered brain! Enana, Hanit, Sesen, Menna, and Renny—could I have been Renny—all were dreams! Hanit! Why such a person never existed. And Ramses! As yet he wasn't born!

I tried to smile at the busy little figure in white. I recognized her now. It was Susan Braintree, my Susan!

I caught myself repeatedly murmuring: "Susan the Lily, Sesen the Lotus, one and the same name, one and the same person perhaps. Ah, my Beautiful Princess! I can smell the sweet unguents which Bhanar has sprinkled upon your dainty wig, the myrrh upon your supple hands . . . !"

Susan presses a little phial to my nostrils. A few short breaths and—I sleep.

THE END





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